

WOMEN IN PURĀṆA TRADITION

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PREFACE

The value of Purāṇa tradition is largely due to its multiplex character. Under the process of upavṛimhaṇa or augmentation it went ahead by retaining antiquated elements and incorporating postmarks to a lesser or larger degree. The evidence of Purāṇa tradition has its worth in the totality of its account. On a single text of the Mahāpurāṇa group or of the Upapurāṇa group may not be of much use for portraying comprehensive picture of the socio-cultural development of the past. In fact historical elements accumulated in Purāṇa tradition is of the nature of Omnium ^{gatherum} ~~gatherum~~ the trustworthiness of which can scarcely be held in doubt, though sometimes and in a few cases it has to be checked and cross-checked by the external evidences. In fact, the transmission of archaic tradition and incorporation of current changes in the customs and practices was a sacred legacy of Purāṇa-authorship. "It was a reconciled presentation of older tradition with the new institutional developments in the society". However, the fact can hardly be denied that the pressure of sectarian bias ^{had} ~~and~~ such a dominant role in subsequent periods that the Purāṇa-authorship could not carry on its age-old

integrity in a number of cases. Consequently one finds it hard to justify the claim that "what is not seen in the Vedic tradition is all noticed in the Smṛiti tradition and what is not seen in both is available in the Purāṇa tradition".

The word "tradition" actually means anything handed down from the past and so strongly rooted as to be as inviolable as laws; it implies the handing down of knowledge, beliefs and customs from one generation to another. The Purāṇa tradition may be defined as something which depicts a composite picture of the past and present. It seeks to adjust and re-adjust the ancient norms with the current developments.

The topic "women in Purāṇa tradition" aims to project the condition of women from early times to the early medieval and medieval periods of Indian History. So far, early and modern scholars including Altekar, Kane, S.A. Dange and many others have made only passing

The methodology of research and approach to the problems which I have adopted in my study is both vertical as well as horizontal. Analysis of one single Purāṇa text may not present before us what we may comfortably call "Purāṇic view". It can not enable us to present a synthetic picture of the actual state of affairs. Consequently, I have followed the horizontal method as well. It is only by combining the two methods together, that delineation of the position of women in historical perspective is possible. Besides, attempt has also been made for checking and cross-checking the Purāṇa-passages by external evidences as and when necessary.

It may be reiterated that the tradition demanded that the Purāṇic corpus should be re-edited with the changes in society so that its importance as work of authority should not decrease. "The task of re-editing was done by adding fresh chapters to the already existing ones and by writing new works bearing old titles. In this process some Purāṇa texts retained their early materials. some lost many of the earlier chapters which are replaced by others

of later dates and some became totally new works." Despite this unique feature of their make-up the Purāṇa texts can be regarded as reliable source books of socio-cultural study of India's past and can well be utilized after taking due precautions in surveying their passages for the purpose of history.

Keeping in view the aforementioned distinguishing features of Purāṇa-composition and its utility for the reconstruction of socio-cultural history, our study of the subject covers the following heads :

(1) Purāṇa-tradition as Source of History :

Main issues of this chapter are as under; emergence of "Purāṇa" and its subsequential formation as a composite class of literature, analysis of the logic in the hypothesis that there was any parent or original "Purāṇa-saṃhitā," traditional number of Purāṇas-eighteen or nineteen; can Śiva Purāṇa be included in the list, original ingredients of Purāṇa, role of Sūta-institution in the development of Purāṇa-tradition, motive and meaning of "pañcalakṣaṇa", transformation of "pañcalakṣaṇa" into "daśalakṣaṇa" probably

under sectarian pressure of a later period, impact of Purāṇa-tradition on dharmaśāstric tradition - on the two Great Epics - on the Smṛiti commentaries of the early medieval period; analysis of the question as to whether Smṛiti-matters in the Purāṇas were borrowed from Smṛiti-texts or from a common source, analysis of the question as to whether in respect of similar issues preference was given to Purāṇa - version or to Smṛiti-version, recognition of authoritative character of Purāṇas in Philosophical tradition, Purāṇa-tradition in Kathā-works; multiplex character of the Purāṇas and their usefulness in understanding and reconstructing the socio-cultural and political history, historical elements accumulated in Purāṇa-tradition being of the nature of omnium-gatherum - often reliable, but sometimes distorted and hence checking and cross-checking is necessary.

(2) Position of girls :

projection of the view that in patriarchal societies birth of girl was considered as an unwelcome event, Purāṇic evidence on this issue, rituals ensuring the birth of a talented daughter; daughter endowed with śīla or virtue considered

to be equal to ten sons; evaluation of Purāṇic reference to putrī explaining it on the lines of definition of putra - one who saves his or her parents from hell; Purāṇic evidence on the fallacy of the view that female infanticide was practised in ancient India; Purāṇic references to the types and categories of girls like Nagnikā, ~~Devī~~ Vrishaṭī, Visha-kanyā, etc; categories of slave girls and their gifts to illustrious personages and temples; evaluation of Purāṇic evidence on daughter's right to paternal property; implication of Purāṇic references to the honouring of Virgin girls on festive occasions; evaluation of Purāṇic evidence on education of girls - references to the brahmavādinī (life-long student of theology) and sadyodvāhā (student till performance of marriage); assessment of Purāṇic data on proficiency of girls in fine art.

(3) Marriage : Evaluation of the hypothesis that there are traces of promiscuity in some passages of Mahābhārata in the light of Purāṇic references to promiscuity or indiscriminate mingling and free sexual relations affecting adversely the well established order of the society during the Kali age; marriage a social

and religious obligation according to Purāṇic view; purpose of marriage - multiplication of progeny; rules for the selection of bride; possible reason of early marriage of girls; instances showing that some girls remained spinsters all their life; general agreement of the Purāṇa tradition with Smṛiti tradition that there are eight forms of marriage; number, however, increased to ten and reduced to four in some Purāṇas, does it refer to some obsolete practice; conditions under which remarriage of women is permitted in the Purāṇas, assessment of Purāṇic view of anuloma, pratiloma, savarṇa, asayotra, asaprevara and asapiṇḍa marriages; assessment of Purāṇic view of the practice of monogamy, polygamy and polyandry.

(4) Position of Widow : Investigation of Purāṇa passages depicting the deplorable condition of the widows; instances of child widows; psychological factors behind the belief that the widows are inauspicious; social implications of the restrictions imposed on the life-standard of the widow; motive behind the custom of tonsure of widows, would it be possible to agree with the hypothesis that its purpose

was to make the outward appearance of the widow in harmony with the ideal of renunciation, that she was expected to follow; do we have any Purāṇic or non-Purāṇic evidence to show that the custom was borrowed from the Jainas and the Bauddhas, in both the sects nuns used to be shaved; evaluation of Purāṇic references to the custom of Sati, can these references strengthen the hypothesis of the sociologists that this custom is a survival of prehistoric practice; assessment of the Purāṇa passages with reference to niyoga or levirate, possible reason of the concept that a son by levirate is to be preferred to a son by adoption, assessment of the Purāṇic explanation of the term niyoga which was so called because of appointment of a person to procreate an issue from the wife of another person; possible reason of the fact why some Purāṇa texts do not look to the custom of niyoga with favour.

(5) Women and religion : Analysis of the hypothesis and investigation of the circumstances responsible for ensuring the woman a religious status as high as that of her husband; analysis of the factors leading to the discontinuation of Upanayana of women and performance of rituals

by them without the recitation of Vedic mantras; conditions in which the wife was permitted to perform funeral rites of the husband; role of women in religious festivals; rituals prescribed for women to procure progeny; Purāṇic view of religious status of a pativrata; circumstances in which a woman was required to purify herself by continuous austerity; social aspect of the religious vows or vratas prescribed for the women in Purāṇa texts; traces of Vedic practice of offer of religious prayers and sacrifices jointly by the husband and wife; would it be possible to argue that on the whole there were some religious disabilities of women, but the ideal was that husband and wife are equal and necessary partners in divine worship.

(6) Status of wife in relation to husband :

Investigation and analysis of Purāṇa passages conforming to the Vedic tradition that husband and wife are joint owners of the house-hold; implication of the Purāṇic view that wife was the best adviser in respect of house management and that the husband was the very fortune of the woman; Purāṇic concept of a good and devoted wife for whom the husband

alone was considered to be a...guru... sociological implication of the Purāṇic concept that a husband has to be respected and adored, may he be ugly or handsome; analysis of Purāṇic allusion to four types of pativrata and social significance of the "Uttamā" type who sees her husband alone, who acts as a servant in work like a prostitute at bed, mother at her husband's meals and a councillor in his difficulties; Purāṇic definition of the term "proshita-patikā", i.e. the woman whose husband is away on a journey, restrictions imposed on such a woman; analysis of the duties of husband towards wife proscribed in the Purāṇa-texts, that she should not be killed even if she is sinful, she should be protected in the same way as a characterless husband is to be protected; assessment of the illustrations of the "pativrata" and her power.

- (7) The Prostitutes : Evaluation of the hypothesis that the institution of prostitute existed in India since Vedic times; R̥gvedic allusion to women who were common to several men; reference to a woman who gives birth in secret to a child and leaves it aside; implication of the reference that a brāhmaṇa should not take meals offered by harlots; evaluation of the reference that

a Vesya was waiting upon Dhṛiṣṭarāshṭra when Gāndhārī was pregnant; analysis of the categorization of the concubines - avaruddhā and bhujiśhyā, interpretation of the Purāṇic legend about the origin of the institution of prostitute, interpretation of the Purāṇic reference that a prostitute was considered to be important on festive occasions; that sight of a prostitute while going on an errand was considered to be auspicious, assessment of the Purāṇic reference that a prostitute must be present at the ritual of tying the sacred protective cord in case of a king and with a clay from the gate of a prostitute's house his waist was thought to be purified; interpretation of the Purāṇic references to temple-girls or Devadāsīs; would it be possible to equate them with concubines; psycho-sociological analysis of the practice of their dedication to Śiva-līṅga; and the belief that a man may have sex with one's own mother if one is infatuated, but he should not have sex with a servant girl of Śiva; assessment of Purāṇic view in sociological context that a person in whose house there is no mother, nor wife nor a prostitute should go to the forest; that beautiful girls should

be purchased for their dedication to temples, that best way to win Sūryaloka is to dedicate a bevy of prostitutes to a solar temple.

(8) Purdā-system : Assessment of the hypothesis that Purdā-system did not exist in the Vedic age, that some kind of Purdā was observed in certain royal families during the epic-paurāṇic period; that by about 200 A.D. some royal families were beginning to think that their ladies should be seen only by the select few, that they should put on a veil when moving in public, ~~an~~ Purāṇic view of the observation that the general adoption of the Purdā-system by the ruling and aristocratic families is subsequent to the Muslim rule; assessment of antiquated Purāṇic references to the non-prevalence of Purdā-system in chronological context; illustrations of the enlightened maidens like Umā, Menā, Dhārīṇī, Bhuvanā, Aparṇā, Ekaparṇā and Ekapāṭalī etc who could not have cultivated proficiency in different branches of knowledge, metaphysical as well as practical in seclusion and ^{away} ~~anya~~ from the fore of the outwordly environment; assessment of Purāṇic reference to the ladies who were in a helpless condition would often avoid going out in public, proshita-patikā

is a glowing instance; would it be possible to argue that Purāṇic references to the observance of Purdā-system in chronological context can not be dated prior to the advent of Muslims, around 1250 A.D.; can the Purāṇic references be cited in endorsing the hypothesis that system of Purdā was known, but it was not wide-spread; that even in royal families it did not find wide acceptance, that in its essential aspect it is an alien legacy.

(9) Position of mothers and Divine mothers :

Assessment of the hypothesis that the apotheosis of mother has reached a greater height in India than anywhere else; that the son could never abandon his mother even if she was socially and religiously bycotted; that father, mother and preceptor were classed together as supreme worthies, that although the widow could not inherit the property of the husband after his death, yet the decorum required that they should live under the protective care of the mother after the death of their father, that ancient Indian history knows of no matricides, that the single case of Parāśurāma is only a case of over-emphasization

of the duty of obeying the father, that a mother excels a thousand fathers; evaluation of Purāṇa-tradition in conformity to the Smṛiti-tradition that the son while living would never be free from the debt which he owes to his mother, that there is no guru like the mother, that one may avert the consequences of all 'curses, but a mother's curse can never be averted, that the glory of mother can never diminish even though she may be a patitā, assessment of the Purāṇic references to the divine mothers and their relevance to the present context; would it be logical to argue that these (divine) "mothers" were divine counter-parts of earthly mothers, being objects of reverence, worship and honour.

Before closing the prefatory notes and comments, it is my pleasant duty to express my obligations to all those who have helped me in one way or the other in preparing this dissertation. I am much beholden to all my predecessors in the field whose works I have consulted with benefit. In fact, the very edifice of the present study has been largely built on their foundation. I am extremely grateful to all my teachers in the Department of Ancient

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PURĀNA-TRADITION AS SOURCE OF HISTORY

The term "Purāṇa-tradition" has no final and absolute meaning. It is a relative term. It covers a number of aspects. It may include Vedic tradition, non-Vedic tradition, ante-Vedic tradition or even pre-Vedic tradition. These aspects and various others of the kind relating to historical value, origin and development of Purāṇa tradition have been exercising the minds of the indlogists since the eighties of the eighteenth century when Sir William Jones for the first time pointed out the historical value of the Purāṇas and its inclusion among the desiderata of oriental studies. It was realized that emergence of "Purāṇa" and its formation as a composite class of literature are two distantly located but integral parts of one and the same tradition. Emergence of Purāṇa can be traced to a much earlier period, while its textual formation points to a subsequent stage. In this context, certain references of Ṛigveda have been taken into account. In no less than three hymns of Ṛigveda, there is reference to the term 'Purāṇa',¹ which, however, does not allude to Purāṇa tradition. The term in the context conveys the sense of antiquity. Similarly, occurrence of the term "Purāṇa gāthā"² has nothing to do with Purāṇa-tradition. It can be taken in the sense of archaic status of gāthā. Some of the gāthās quoted in the Ṛigveda may

be pre-Vedic. As regards the other Vedic texts Kane and Hazra have drawn our attention to two hymns of Atharvaveda which make allusion to Purāṇa (in the singular).³ It is narrated in the passages under reference that "the ṛik and sāman verses, the chandas, the Purāṇa along with the Yajus formulae sprang from the remainder of sacrificial food".⁴ The second hymn alludes to the knower of Purāṇa (purāṇavit) who is capable of observing the non-existent phenomenon.⁵ Gopatha Brāhmaṇa recognises Purāṇa as one of the vedāṅgas alongwith upnishads, kalpa etc.⁶ It also refers to Purāṇaveda and Itihāśaveda.⁷ It may be that by the time of Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, Purāṇa and Itihāśa had established their separate entities and were considered distinct from each other.⁸ However, one can not be definite about the above possibility. Thus Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to Purāṇa both independently as well as in association with Itihāśa.⁹ Āśvalāyana Gṛihya Sūtra, a later Vedic text explicitly refers to the study and recitation of Purāṇa. Winternitz rightly observes that, Purāṇa was the generic term for the Ākhyānas scattered in the Vedic texts, some of which are reproduced in the extant texts of the Purāṇas.¹⁰ It is quite probable that these Ākhyānas were collated and rearranged by the later authors, and Purāṇa as a separate class of literature emerged out of it.

The general appeal of the Purāṇa tradition either to the common mass or to the elite was not possible unless otherwise the Purāṇas were given text form. The present task seems to have been completed by the time of the early Dharmasūtras. Thus the Gautama Dharma Sūtra, the oldest Dharmasūtra assignable to circa 600 B.C. recognises the authenticity of the Purāṇas along with the Vedas and Vedāṅgas.¹¹ The reference reveals that, by this period the Purana tradition was no longer confined to memory, it was subjected to writing. However, it is difficult to ascertain as to whether the Dharmasūtra refers here to some original Purāṇa-composition or to the group of Purāṇa-compositions. It may also be possible to argue that the authenticity of Purāṇas was recognized in legal matters, because the later Dharmasūtras allude to similar practice. Unless we believe that Purāṇa tradition was shifted from memory to writing, it can not be thought of their having been taken as authentic works in legal matters. The evidence of Āpastamba Dharmasūtra seems to be more relevant on this point. It quotes three passages, two of which are said to be related to some Purāṇas. Names of these Purāṇas ^{are} ~~is~~ however, not mentioned. The source of the third one is said to be Bhavishya Purāṇa.¹² It may be that the aforementioned citations existed in the original texts

and were left out later in the recompilation stage. Hazra is fully justified in stating that more Purāṇas than one had come into existence long before the beginning of the Christian era, and the number of the Purāṇas had begun to be multiplied even before the time of Āpastamba.¹³ However, we will not be on the erring side in suggesting that regional variations and sectarian prejudices had probably crept into the original kernel of Purāṇa literature during the periods when it was yet to assume the form of a separate class of compilation. This could be the only possible factor playing a significant role in the emergence of more than one text at the stage when the Purana was shifted *from memory to writing*.

Since the pioneer stage of Purāṇic researches, spate of publications have come to the fore relating to the problem of existence of parent Purāṇa-saṃhitā. Jackson and a few more scholars advocated that there was only one Purāṇa in the beginning.¹⁴ In support of this theory the following points were brought forward: employment of the word Purāṇa in singular in the passages of Atharvaveda; identity of language in the dynastic list of the Purāṇas; and the traditional account of there being one single Purāṇa in the beginning. This possibility has been ruled

out by Winternitz.¹⁵ Hazra,¹⁶ and Pusalkar¹⁷ on reasonable grounds. We may suggest here that the term Purāṇa employed in singular number in some texts is capable of conveying only two possible meanings. It has reference either to ancient myth or it may also signify the compiled status of the Purāṇa literature. The actual state of affairs is possibly brought out by the evidence of two Vedic texts, namely, the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa and the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka. In the former text, the word Purāṇa is used in plural number and is associated with word Veda.¹⁸ The latter text mentions the term Purāṇa without any associate word.¹⁹ It is thus evident that although an original Purāṇa-saṃhitā could prove to be the parent type of the texts belonging to this class, yet the possibility of its existence is hardly brought out by the evidences explored so far.

The theory of existence of one original Purāṇa saṃhitā may not be accepted. But, the question remains as to whether we can suggest any clue to fix the number of the original Purāṇas. To some extent Winternitz has possibly suggested a plausible clue in this regard. He has made a special note of a Viṣṇu Purāṇa's verse which alludes to four original Purāṇas without specifying their names. The said verse relates

that these four Purāṇas were composed by Romaharshaṇa, the well known Sūta of Purāṇa tradition and his three distinguished disciples. But, the noted scholar does not take the authenticity as final, for want of any reliable information.²⁰ However, we can not ignore the value of the verse in postulating that originally the number was four at the stage of first collation and text formation. Almost in the same tune Vāyu Purāṇa alludes to the composition of ten original Purāṇas without mentioning their names. It is not improbable that the passage of Vāyu Purāṇa under reference points to that stage of Purāṇa compilation, when the number was raised from four to ten. According to Haraprasad Sastri in the only genuine portion of Vāyu Purāṇa, the number of Purāṇas is given as ten, so that this represents the next stage in the development of the Purāṇas ^{when} their number was raised from four as given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, to ten. He further states that the traditional number eighteen is the final stage.²¹ Pargiter observes that the ultimate number of the Purāṇas had been increased to nineteen because Śiva Purāṇa is also enlisted in some Purāṇa texts. As far the number nineteen and inclusion of Śiva Purāṇa in a few lists, it is significant to note that reference to Śiva Purāṇa is made nowhere in the common list of the Purāṇas,

Śiva Purāṇa is one of the leading Upa-Purāṇas. Generally speaking it was never recognised as Mahāpurāṇa. It has been rightly observed that, its status was raised by the Śaiva sectaries, who inadvertently inserted its name in the old list.²³ The earliest reference to Śiva Purāṇa is found in the account of Alberuni,²⁴ and by that time the Purāṇas had detracted the early tradition. The Purāṇas which enlist the Śiva Purāṇa make no reference to Vāyu Purāṇa. It has been observed that the Vāyu Purāṇa was subjected to revision at later stages to such an extent that in a number of its passages it gives the look of a sectarian Purāṇa of Śaivite school.²⁵ This evident factor may be accounted for its replacement by Śiva Purāṇa in some of the Purāṇic lists.

It has been shown that number eighteen was a deliberate selection owing to the Sāṅkhya-oriented elements contained in the Purāṇas; the original purāṇa-passages deal with the theory of creation, while according to the theory of Sāṅkhya philosophy the created elements are eighteen in number.²⁶ One finds it hard to agree with this suggestion in view of the fact that the fixation of number of Purāṇas is a later phenomenon, when the Purāṇas had lost their

appeal in regard to the original elements of which creation theory was an integral part. In fact, no precise explanation can be attributed to this problem. It can only be suggested that the eighteen textual number of the Purāṇas, eighteen chapter - division of Bhagavadgītā and eighteen parva-division of Mahābhārata was motivated by identical tradition in each case. In Chapter 53 of Matsya Purāṇa there is distinct reference to number eighteen of the Purāṇas. Hazra places the date of composition of this chapter between 550 A.D. and 650 A.D.²⁷ Number of Purāṇas may have been fixed near about this period.

In the present context Kane examines a passage of Viṣṇu Purāṇa (III. 6.21-23) which enumerates the number of Purāṇas as eighteen. He also draws our attention to the account of Alberuni, who in his work on India (Composed in 1030 A.D.) sets out one list of Purāṇas as read out to him from Viṣṇu Purāṇa. This shows, according to Kane, "that the list of 18 principal Purāṇas had been completed long before 1000 A.D."²⁸

One may be tempted to suggest that the original title Bhārata was transformed into Mahābhārata, Kāvya into Mahākāvya and Purāṇa into Mahāpurāṇa under

identical traditional pressure. For the age of transformation of the term Purāṇa into Mahāpurāṇa clue is provided by Daṇḍin, who in his Kāvyaḍarsa has made pointed reference to Mahākāvya and has also discussed its salient features in clear terms. The age of Daṇḍin can not be fixed later than 800 A.D. but in no case earlier than 500 A.D.²⁹ Hence roughly speaking 7th century A.D. may be treated as the period when the term Mahāpurāṇa had become quite common and the Purāṇa-number had been finally fixed.

It would be worthwhile to analyse the genesis of the Purāṇa literature in order to have an idea of the factors contributing to the development of the Purāṇa tradition. In early stages the term Purāṇa was nothing more than a synonym of ākhyāna. Generally speaking Purāṇa had no distinct status and it was supposed to be only a part of the Vedas. The collection and incorporation of the ākhyānas activated the process of formation of Purāṇa as a separate class of treatise. Precise definition of the Purāṇic ākhyānas is sometimes taken into account. It has been pointed out that the commentary of Śrīdhara is the leading authority on the definition of ākhyāna.³⁰ The commentary quotes a verse, which is supposed to be old. The verse relates that ākhyāna means dṛishtārthakathana. In view of

this, it has been shown that ākhyāna points to what has been observed or what has been experienced. It is thus evident that ākhyānas were not without meaning or motive. Their development owed largely to the experience of the traditional authors of the Purāṇas and they were applied to the suitability of the later changes in the society.

The tradition to treat the ākhyāna as a separate entity had not altogether vanished even after its becoming part of Purāṇa. In this connection a verse of Manusmṛiti is cited. It mentions svādhyāya, dharmaśāstra, itihāsa, ākhyāna and purāṇa distinct from each other. Their recitation is said to be efficacious on the occasion of Śrāddha. This shows that ākhyāna had maintained its independent status and was supposed to be as significant as Purāṇa.³¹ It is significant that in the available texts of the Purāṇas, there are a number of such ākhyānas which evince their separate entity at the original stage, but were incorporated into the Purāṇas for the sake of authenticity and popular appeal. Sometimes the same ākhyāna occurs twice in one and the same Purāṇa in two different contexts. Attention may be drawn here to Jāmadagnya-ākhyāna and Bharata-ākhyāna occurring respectively in Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa and Viṣṇu

Purāṇa. In one context their account is nothing more than a summary as compared to the context which elaborates them at full length.³² In the context of their elaborate form they create the impression of an independent account without being connected with the Purāṇa texts.

Itihāsa was yet another ingredient which was brought within the framework of Purāṇa-compilation. Vedic passages reveal that Purāṇa and itihāsa were treated as co-extensive. But the meaning of itihāsa is hard to be explained on the basis of the Vedic passages. Geldner suggests that there must have been existing Purāṇaveda and Itihāsaveda in the Vedic period.³³ Winternitz does not agree with this suggestion. According to him in these contexts the terms Itihāsaveda and Purāṇaveda do not have any reference to separate books. References to these terms can only show Itihāsa and Purāṇa were recognised as subjects of study.³⁴ A.S. Gupta draws our attention to a passage of Gopatha Brāhmaṇa which refers to Sarpaveda, Piśācaveda, Asurveda, Itihāsaveda and Purāṇaveda separately. In the said passage these five vedas are mentioned as source of five separate Mahāvṛitis. Thus, they may be taken as five separate works.³⁵ But the passage can be interpreted from a

more suitable angle. It can be taken only in the sense of popularity of itihāsa, purāṇa and other three terms. It can hardly mean composition of five separate works. The word veda suffixed to these terms can only mean knowledge or subject of study. In such contexts, where separate or composite works are intended, one should expect suffix saṁhitā instead of veda. In fact Purāṇa and Itihāsa were supposed to be of equal ^{merit} ~~ment~~. The well known evidence of Chhāndogya upanishad makes it evident, that although Itihāsa and Purāṇa did not exist as separate works, yet they were taken in the sense of subjects of distinguished ^{merit} ~~ment~~ and their combined form was designated as Veda.³⁶ It appears that the subject matter of the recognized vedas and Vedāṅgas was considerably comprehensive. The duration of their composition must have covered a long span of time. Consequently, the exact form of Itihāsa and Purāṇa was dependent upon the post-Vedic trends. Taking into account some Purāṇic and non-Purāṇic evidences, Upadhyaya rightly concludes that the demarcation line between Itihāsa and Purāṇa was quite indistinct in early times and difference between the two could be cleared off only in later times.³⁷

In later periods Śaṅkara and Sāyaṇa have attempted to explain the two terms in their

commentaries on the passages of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. These passages allude to the ākhyāna of Urvaśī and Purūravā; description of Srisṭiprakṛiyā also occurs in them. Śaṅkara comments that the former is subject of itihāsa, while the latter one is said to be related to Purāṇa. Position is entirely reversed in the commentary of Sāyaṇa, the former figures for the term Purāṇa and the latter is called itihāsa.³⁸ It may be that the commentary of Śaṅkara is nearer to the truth. Srisṭiprakṛiyā was the first and well established characteristic of Purāṇa (pañcalakṣhaṇa) and hence it could hardly come under the scope of itihāsa. The account of Urvaśī and Purūravā has the touch of legend and thus it could fulfil the definition of an ākhyāna. This analysis is also insufficient to solve the problem. It is not improbable that the term itivṛtta, which occurs in the Arthasāstra of Kauṭilya is the same as the itihāsa of the above texts.³⁹ It may be suggested that itihāsa was a synonymous term for ākhyāna because of its indication to some event, without having any consideration for the reality or otherwise nature of the narrative mentioned in it. Pargiter has rightly observed that, in the Purāṇa passages the term itihāsa has been used without any definite meaning. It denotes general statement, special statement, kings and description

of gods in the various contexts of the passages, sometimes it is also used simply in the sense of a legend.⁴⁰

Kalpa was yet another integral part of the genesis of Purāṇa-text; which is sometimes replaced by the terms kalpajokti or kalpasuddhi. Generally speaking the term kalpa was included in the vedāṅga and its knowledge was supposed to be efficacious for the applicability of the Vedic rites. Sāyaṇa explains the term according to its etymological meaning and observes that kalpa was so known because it was instrumental in the performance of the Vedic sacrifices. It would be possible to argue that, since the word had antique colour in it, the Purāṇa authors adopted it in their composition. It has been suggested that the term may be taken in the sense of periodical events. Such terms as purātana-kalpa and purākalpavid occurring in the Purāṇa-passages may denote old stories and the persons who are well-versed in narrating such old stories.⁴¹ It may be that the term kalpa was used in the Purāṇa-compositions in order to insure stamp of earliness to the passages compiled in them from time to time. During the periods when new socio-cultural trends were incorporated into the Purāṇa-passages, the word kalpa was added to these passages with deliberate intention. The word kalpa,

purāṭanakaḷpa and many others of the kind must have contributed to the authoritative character of the passages with which they were associated.

Another element of the genesis of the Purāṇa-compilation was gāthā. It helped expanding the Purāṇa-bulk and giving them colour of authoritative works. There is identity of style in the genus of the gāthās available in the Vedic and Purāṇic texts. Thus the Brāhmaṇas are composed in prose and have reference to ākhyānas in most of their sections. In these texts gāthās in versified form are quoted in the midst of such ākhyānas with a view to giving authoritative colour to their descriptions.⁴² In Purāṇa-passages gāthās occur in quotation forms. Regarding the distinguishing form of the gāthās, Winternitz rightly observes that they were intended to describe the heroic deeds of some great personality and very often the descriptive ākhyānas were summed up through their medium.⁴³

An original ingredient of the Purāṇa-text was upākhyāna. As pointed out earlier the traditional commentator of the Purāṇas, Śrīdhara explained that the event which is actually observed or experienced is ākhyāna. In the same continuation the commentator states that the event which has been heard by the

author is upākhyāna (śrutasya kathanamupākhyānaṁ sam pracakshate). It has also been shown that ākhyāna or upākhyāna are so known because of their comprehensive or concise nature (mahadalpavyavasthayā). The former explanation seems plausible. For, even some lengthy narratives like those of Rāma, Naciketā and Yayāti are mentioned under the titles Rāmopakhyāna, Naciketopākhyāna and Yayatyūpakhyāna.

It may be pointed out that the above ingredients existed in earlier periods either in developed or less developed forms. These matters had not been collated in a coherent form for long period and were awaiting compilation as a separate class of literature for which the word Purāṇa was the most appropriate name. An indication to the above effect is given by a Purāṇa verse running as under "ākhyānaiscupākhyānairgāthābhiḥ kalpaśuddhibhiḥ purāṇasaṁhitāñcākre purāṇārthaviśāraḍaḥ" (Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III. 6.15, Vāyu Purāṇa, 60.21; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa II. 3.31). It will not be safe to state that the reference is here to the original or parent Purāṇa Saṁhitā.⁴⁴ It has been rightly pointed out that the possibility of one original Purāṇa-saṁhitā can not be postulated in the same way as the possibility of one original Veda-saṁhitā; the existence of which is extremely

doubtful.⁴⁵ In all probability, the reference is to the process of compilation which played a significant role in collating and arranging the matters specified in the verse.

The compilation of Purāṇas, atleast in early stages was largely due to the class of narrators designated in the Purāṇa-text as Sūta. Traditions vary regarding the origin and functions of the Sūtas. In early Purāṇa tradition they are styled as Paurāṇika Sūta. But in the later traditin they figure as Pratiloma Sūta or Māgadha. Reasonably speaking there was a sharp distinction between these two classes of Sūtas. The Paurāṇika Sūta enjoyed a respectful position in the society. His versions were quoted to authenticate the Purāṇa passages especially in connection with the Vāmśa and vāmśānucarita sections. For this reason, some high sounding epithets such as vāmśa-kusāṇa, dhīmāna and kritabuddhi ~~was~~^{were} applied to him. Pratiloma Sūta belonged to the mixed caste originating from Kshatriya father and Brāhmaṇa mother.^{45A} Taking into the evidence of Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, Kane opines that in the days of Kauṭilya Sūta and Māgadha were pratiloma castes, but the Sūta and Māgadha mentioned as the first reciters of the Purāṇas are a category apart, that they do not belong

to pratiloma castes and are both distinguished from brahmanas and kshatriyas⁴⁶ (~~and the other two~~), V.S. Pathak holds that Sūta was regarded as a venerable sage. This institution was connected with Briṅgvāṅgiras brāhmanas who were responsible for the development of nistorical tradition in ancient India.⁴⁷

From what has been said above it follows that, (a) beginning of Purāṇa-compilation was marked by the collation of four ingredients, namely; ākhyāna, uvākhyāna, gāthā and kalpa (also known as kalpasuddhi or kalpajokti); (b) The task of collation was done by Sūta, who was considered to be a venerable sage; (c) the expression "purāṇa-saṁhitā" does not point to any particular text, it points to a particular style adopted by the original bearers (the Sūta) of the Purāṇa tradition; (d) the original four ingredients which are thus found in the Purāṇas are pre-Purāṇic matters, they were incorporated into Purāṇas with a view to giving antiquarian colour to the passage and to justifying the significance of the word Purāṇa.

It is significant to note that, it was Pargiter who pointed out for the first time that the five characteristics (specified in the pañcalakṣhaṇa)

were the earliest subject matters of the Purāṇas.⁴⁸ The point, which is of special note in this context is that, although the number five in respect of characteristic features had been fixed, yet there was no unanimity with reference to the subject matter. Thus a Purāṇic description alludes to bhūmismsthāna (i.e. description of bhuvanakośa) and makes it the fifth characteristic. The expression Vāṁśānucarita is dropped out in the said definition.⁴⁹ This may probably point to the antiquity of bhuvanakośa material available in the Purāṇa-texts. Rajeshwar Drāviḍ has drawn our attention to another pañcalakṣhaṇa definition of the Purāṇas, reference to which is made in the Jayamaṅgalā commentary of Kauṭilya's Arthasāstra. The commentator points out that this definition comes from an early composition. The five characteristics enumerated in this definition are as under; creation, continuation, destruction, dharma and moksha⁵⁰ ~~and the~~. It is, however, not improbable that the reference of the commentary has its relation to that period when the non-sectarian early character of the Purāṇas had considerably changed and they had come in the category of religious and moral codes. The Purāṇa-texts themselves offer ample evidence to the effect that the age-old pañcalakṣhaṇa definition was put to severe modification in which the religious bias

of the Purāṇa-authors played a significant role. Thus a passage of Viṣṇu Purāṇa relates that the five characteristics of the Purāṇas are aimed at the glorification of god Viṣṇu.⁵¹ Similarly a passage of Matsya Purāṇa relates that the five characteristics of the Purāṇas are aimed at illustrating the supremacy of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Rudra.⁵² There is reference to daśalakṣhaṇa of the Purāṇas in the 12th skandha of the Bhāgavat. The text adds that the number five or ten emerges out of smaller or larger planning of a particular Purāṇa-text. Pusalker feels that by "smaller planning" Upa-Purāṇas are intended.⁵³ It may, however, be pointed out that the indication of the Bhāgavata passage is towards the Purāṇa-technique which required the retainment of the old material alongside the addition of new material in response to the current socio-religious norms. Thus another passage of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa lays down that the Purāṇa-characteristics are determined in accordance with śruti and artha.⁵⁴ The words śruti and artha can only denote that the upholders of the Purāṇa school adhered to the early tradition without discarding the modes and customs of the current periods, since they were too popular to be neglected. As far the Upa-Purāṇas, the evidences at our disposal do not admit of any such logic that these texts had

any "smaller planning." Traditionally, these texts are regarded as the "khila" or supplement of the Purāṇas, but in general practice the position seems to be quite different.⁵⁵ It has been rightly observed that from the point of view of their bulk and volume, incorporation of varied types of material and recognition as a class of literary pieces, the significance of Upa-Purāṇas was by no means inferior to the Purāṇas.⁵⁶ After the group of eighteen principal Purāṇas had been compiled, many sub-systems and sects like the Śāktas and Sauras came into prominence and their adherents interpolated chapters in the established Purāṇas and wrote new and independent Purāṇic works styled as "Purāṇa" in order to propagate new ideas and some of these latter came to be called Upa-Purāṇa.⁵⁷

It appears that, by 5th - 4th centuries B.C., the Purāṇas had made their mark in the Dharmasāstra tradition. Thus the Gautama Dharmasūtra refers to the person who is expert in Purāṇa and is also conversant with Veda, Vedāṅga, Vākovākya, itihāsa etc.⁵⁸ The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra notices two verses of some Purāṇa without specifying the name of the text.⁵⁹

Impact of Purāṇa tradition was also experienced by the two great epics, namely, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. The former text employs the term Purāṇavit to a person who was held in high esteem because of his knowledge of Purāṇas.^{59A} Sumantra is styled as Sūta, who is said to have related to Daśaratha the past events described in the texts of the Purāṇas.^{59B} In the text of Mahābhārata, there are some interesting passages throwing light on the impact of Purāṇa tradition during the period of compilation of the Great Epic. In one of its passages occurring in the ādiparva, it relates that Vyāsa composed the eighteen Purāṇas first and subsequently he composed the Mahābhārata. This passage may be an interpolation, incorporated in the text under the process of what is known in the Epic-purāṇa tradition as Upavṛimhaṇa; it required addition of new passages in response to the current socio-religious changes. Still more significant is the verse occurring in the Vanaparva. It refers to the authenticity Vāyu Purāṇa for the knowledge of the past and future events.⁶⁰

Authenticity of Purāṇa tradition may also be visualized in the light of Smṛiti tradition. Haṣra shows that Smṛiti chapters were added in the Purāṇas at a later stage.⁶¹ However, the evidence of Kādambarī

shows that during the age of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, i.e. 7th century A.D. Purāṇa along with Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata was treated as Dharmasāstra (āgameshu sarveshu Purāṇa-Rāmāyaṇa-Mahābhārata). This shows that the Smṛiti chapters were incorporated in the Purāṇas around 7th century A.D.

Development of Purāṇa tradition during the early medieval period can also be assessed in the light of Smṛiti-commentaries. We may analyse here Medhātithi's commentary on Manusmṛiti. In his commentary Medhātithi quotes certain verses, the source of which are said to be the Purāṇas.⁶¹ Names of Purāṇas, however, are not specified. The Purāṇa-verses quoted by Medhātithi are characterised by two significant features. In the first place these verses occur mostly with reference to the passages on creation and recreation of the universe. Secondly, some of these verses claim their association with Smṛiti texts. Hazra rightly shows that in the ancient Purāṇas, the original forms or the counterforms of these verses can well be found to some extent.⁶² The evidence of Medhātithi also reveals that even in the later stages the distinguishing feature of Purāṇa-composition was recognised in respect of its early matters including sarga (creation) and pratisarga (recreation), the first two elements of pañcalakṣaṇa-

definition. The evidence also reveals that the pañcalakṣhaṇa was going into disuse, and Purāṇas were considered to be akin to Smṛiti-texts.

So far the scholars have not paid due attention to answering the question as to whether Smṛiti-matters in the Purāṇas are borrowed from the Smṛiti-texts or from a common tradition to which the composed matters of the Smṛiti-texts are also due. A passage occurring in the Hārīta Saṁhitā is of some use.⁶³ Hārīta assigns equal importance to the Smṛitis and the Purāṇas for deciding the days and occasions prohibited for study. On the other hand Viṣṇuśāstra makes pointed reference to prāyascitta detailed in the Hārīta-Saṁhitā and suggests its indebtedness to Purāṇas.⁶⁴ It is thus evident that, for their Smṛiti-matters Purāṇas owe not so much to the Smṛiti-texts as to the source material of a common tradition.

Question has been raised as to whether in respect of similar issue preference was given to Smṛiti tradition or Purāṇa tradition. IN this context J.D.M. Derrett quotes a passage from Aparārka, which refers to the preference of Purāṇa-version over Smṛiti in case of textual disagreement.⁶⁵ Hazra observes that some difference between the two traditions can

be marked in the early stages. But the later Nibandhakāras attached equal importance to both these traditions.⁶⁶ If the latter suggestion is accepted, it will follow that the early disagreement between the two traditions could not continue in later times.

The Purāṇa tradition also kept its door open to incorporate Vyavahāra passages during the early medieval and medieval periods. These passages were added in the Purāṇa-texts without any reference to a consistent plan. In some texts they give the impression of huge mass of collections outnumbering their counterparts preserved in other ones. Even in early Purāṇas the original account seems to have been replaced by these later additions to the extent that the concerned Purāṇa-texts have lost their original character. Due to these omissions, it becomes difficult to use these text for the kind of information originally intended in them. In this connection Derrett has attached much value to Matsya Purāṇa for Vyavahāra passages contained in it.⁶³ However, we should not overlook the fact that the text of Matsya Purāṇa has suffered the greatest loss consequent upon the process of commission and omission of passages. This is the result of the well-known Purāṇic device called upavṛimhaṇa or samupavṛimhaṇa, which was

operative in Purāṇa compilation from the very beginning. Adhering to this device the Purāṇa-authors in many cases have not cared for preserving the original passages, while adding the new ones with a view to making the account upto-date. It is significant to note that the textual integrity of the Purāṇa text was not hard to be maintained despite upavṛimhaṇa. We may illustrate here the example of Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The early character of the present text is beyond doubt. Like Matsya Purāṇa, this text too was used by the later compilers for incorporating in it the Vyavahāra passages. The addition has not caused any major dislocation or loss of the original passages, which are intact in the text to a satisfactory extent. We may not raise any objection against the observations of Hazra⁶⁸ and Derrett⁶⁹ that quotations from Matsya Purāṇa overcrowd the lines of the Nibandhakāras. In respect of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, on the other hand, such cases are a few. It may be reiterated that while the original pañcalakṣhaṇa style was adopted for fixing the scope of Purāṇa-composition the archaistic style of upavṛimhaṇa was aimed at the incorporation of matters to meet the challenges of new socio-religious elements of the current circumstances.

Ancient Indian Philosophical tradition also felt the impact of Purāṇa tradition. Thus in his *Tantravārttika* Kumārila recognizes the evidence of Purāṇas explaining the causes of decline of dharma in the Kali age (*smaryante ca purāṇeshu dharma-viplutibhāṣaḥ*, 1, 3, 7). In this context Kumārila makes reference to the term *smaryante*, which is of special note. The word *smaryante*, in all likelihood, is towards the fact that the old tradition which had its emphasis on memorising the Purāṇas even in the age when these texts had already been committed to writing. Kumārila has explained that decline of dharma in kali is being done by Buddha and others and adds that no body is paying attention to their teachings. It has been observed that in the Purāṇas to which Kumārila has referred, Buddha has been badly condemned.⁷⁰ This observation may be partly true in view of Kumārila's general remark on the Purāṇa tradition speaking of decline of dharma in the Kali age owing to Buddhism and Jainism. The possibility of the fact has been pointed out here that the Purāṇic reference cited by Kumārila is missing from the extant texts of the Purāṇas. Perhaps for this obvious reason Kumārila uses the term *smaryante* instead of any such terms which may point to the availability of the reference in the preserved passages of the Purāṇas. An intensive

survey of the Purāṇa texts tends to bring out that the Purāṇas have accorded a just sense of honour to Buddha. In ~~these~~ ^{these} texts Buddha is regarded as the Māyāmoha incarnation of Viṣṇu, who succeeded in destroying the adversaries of the Vedic tradition through his supernatural deluding power. The passage of Tantravārttika has probably its reference to the early stage of Purāṇa tradition, when Buddhism was in the heyday of its life and was not in consonance with the brahmanical tradition. The passages which are now available in the Purāṇa-texts point to the stage of its decline. A survey of Purāṇa passages reveals that, at this later stage attempt was made by the Paurāṇikas to assimilate Buddhism in the brahmanical tradition. In another passage of Tantravārttika, reference is made to the unity established between heaven and roof of Meru.⁷¹ Similar allusion is available in the texts of Matsya Purana (11. 37-38) and Padma Purāṇa (pātālakhaṇḍa, 8.72-73).

It is noteworthy that, in the latter reference Kumārila makes use of term Ucyate, which points to the availability of the description in the extant Purāṇas. Thus, Kumārila's references reveal two distinct aspects of Purāṇa-tradition. In the first aspect we find alteration or even modification of

passages which were inconsonant with the current practices. The second aspect is characterized by the incorporation of such passages, the appeal of which had been constantly maintained in the society.

Besides Kumārila, Śaṅkara also recognized the authoritative character of the Purāṇa-tradition. More than often he supports his commentaries on the Upanishads and the Brahmasūtra by the passages, the source of which are said to be the Smṛitis and the Purāṇas. This point had earlier attracted the attention of Winternitz.⁷² Upadhyaya has brought to light a number of such passages, which need fresh analysis.⁷³ On such occasions as Hazra points out Śaṅkara makes generic reference to the Purāṇas without specifying the names of these texts.⁷⁴ Without disagreeing with the observation of Hazra, we may suggest that Purāṇic allusions of Śaṅkara's reference are available not only in early Purāṇa texts like Vāyu, Brahmaṇḍa and Viṣṇu but also in Śiva Purāṇa which is a late Purāṇa-text. This analysis probably reveals that in the age of Śaṅkara the authenticity of a passage was considered not because of the earliness of the text but because of the earliness of the matter preserved in a particular Purāṇa.

The authenticity of Purāṇa-tradition can also be visualized in the light of the Kathā-works. These texts contain parallel types or sometimes even parent types of ākhyānas which played an important role in the development of Purāṇa-tradition right from the very beginning. These ākhyānas served the purpose of Purāṇic technique of giving story-forms to such accounts which were beyond the grasp of common mind in their original abstract form. Although the Kathā-account had assumed the form of a separate class of literature, yet the fact can not be denied that with a view to gaining the stamp of publicity it was very often made part of Purāṇa-text. Sternbach observes that proverbial, instructive and ethical verses which are available in the relevant contexts of the Purāṇas bestow striking similarity to those available in the Kathā-works.⁷⁵ These verses are not only partially identical, but are also indistinguishable in a number of cases. Despite their dissimilar forms, they are intended to convey similar meaning. More significant are the verses of Kathā-works, which refer to the authority of the Purāṇas in a number of cases. It may be noted that the quoted verses are missing from the relevant contexts of the Purāṇas. However, the proverbial verses are preserved in them. IN view of the proverbial verses, the Purāṇa texts are

presentable in the following order : Bhavishya, Agni, Garuḍa, Brahmaivaivartta, Bhāgavata, Vāmana, Matsya, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Skanda. It would be significant to find out as to whether Kathā-text or the Purāṇa-text was considered to be the better authority in respect of proverbial verses. In this context Sternbach draws our attention to Śukasaptati, which recognizes the authority of Bhavishya Purāṇa for its proverbial verses. Besides, Śukasaptati, Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā is another important Kathā-work. Bhavishya Purāṇa allude to the entire story of Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā. But, the authentic character of the extant Bhavishya Purāṇa is extremely doubtful. Original matter is hardly traceable in the text. Fresh matters of quite late periods are incorporated in the text. The section of the text which alludes to Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā also refers to British rule in India. It is possible that the portion on Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā was already present in the text at the stage of incorporating the passages which smack of modernity. There is also another possibility. The said kathā-work was incorporated in the Bhavishya Purāṇa at two stages. Originally when it was added in the Bhavishya, it had no text form. At the subsequent stage it assumed the form of a separate text. For its addition the Bhavishya was retouched. Similar trend seems to have operated

in respect of other Purāṇa texts. But it is not detectable as clearly as in case of the Bhaviṣhya Purāṇa. This may be cited as an evidence of mutual indebtedness of the Purāṇa-texts and the Kathā-texts.

The foregoing details tend to show that the Purāṇa-tradition is of multiplex character; its utility can hardly be denied for the reconstruction of various shades of history of ancient, early medieval and medieval history of India. As we have noted above the expansile format of the Purāṇa-texts was to a large extent due to the application of the archaistic style called "Purāṇa-samupavṛimhāṇa," i.e. process of augmentation. We can hardly disagree with the view that the problem of Purāṇa-literature is not in the hands of chronology, for it should be clearly understood that in almost all the Purāṇas the process of Upavṛimhāṇa was operative from the very beginning and upto later times. Explaining the objective of upavṛimhāṇa it has been observed that it is pejorative to speak of it as interpolation. It was a sacred obligation of authorship to keep the text up to date by revising its contents as often as necessary. The expression 'upavṛimhāṇa' has also been defined as the act of editing or redacting which is visible in all the Purāṇas. It has been emphasised that the

upavṛimhaṇa was a deliberate technique, consequent upon which the existing Purāṇas have gained in size and scope.⁷⁶ Throwing light on the process of upavṛimhaṇa though not explicitly Kane observes that after the 9th century A.D. additional matter seems to have been unscrupulously inserted in several Purāṇas the worst sufferer of the kind being the third part of Bhavishya Purāṇa, which contains stories of Adam and Eve, Prithviraja and Jayachandra, Taimur, Akbar, Caitanya, Bhaṭṭoji, Nādirshaha and so on.⁷⁷ In fact, it is largely due to the impact of the process of Upavṛimhaṇa that the Purāṇas have turned to be encyclopaedia of information, and as V.R.R. Dikshitar holds, these texts are very useful in writing a history of Indian Culture and Civilization.⁷⁸ Similar is the observation of Hazra that the Purāṇas have not come down to us with their early incorporations, because tradition demanded that they should be re-edited with the changes in society so that their importance as works of authority might not decrease. The work of re-editing could be done in three ways : viz., (I) by adding fresh chapters to the already existing ones, (II) by substituting the latter⁷⁹ by the former, (III) by writing new works bearing old titles. All these processes being equally practised with respect to the Purāṇas, some retained their

earlier materials, some lost many of the earlier chapters which were replaced by others of later dates, and some became totally new works.⁷⁹

The unique character of the Purāṇa tradition is because of its comprehensive form. It has proved to be helpful in understanding and reconstructing the socio-cultural and political history of early and later periods. The utility of Purāṇa passages has been realized even for the projection of vedic history. There are cases of synchronisms in the Vedic and Purāṇa passages, the examples of which have been illustrated by the scholars most convincingly.⁸⁰ The set of traditions, which is propagated by the Purāṇas is basically founded on the Vedic heritage.⁸¹ The kings of the traditional account of the Purāṇas not figuring in the Ṛigveda may be pre-Vedic.⁸² There is nothing unscientific or unhistorical in utilizing the Purāṇic data on the pre-Pāṇḍava period for reconstructing contemporary history after taking all due precautions. Various pre-Bhārata dynasties mentioned in the Purāṇas are as real and historical as the Śisunāgas, or the Mauryas or the Āndhras.⁸³ The Purāṇic evidence is more trustworthy than the philological one and is corroborated by the Vedic tradition.⁸⁴ There is harmony in the midst of apparent

discrepancies in the various lists of names given in the Purāṇic records on pre-Mahābhārata solar dynasty.⁸⁵ Pre-Bhārata war history can be reconstructed on the basis of agreement between the Vedic and Purāṇic traditions.⁸⁶

In addition to the above observations of the scholars, it would not be out of place to mention that the account in the Purāṇas was compiled at a very late stage. It was compiled out of the remnants of the Vedic lores during the times when memories of had become faint and far removed from actual state of affairs. However, the fact can hardly be denied that oft-quoted discrepancies of the Purāṇa-account ^{are} ~~is~~ more apparent than real. It should not be forgotten that the Vedic texts and Purāṇa texts were produced under different circumstances with different aims and ^{objectives.} ~~objects.~~ Consequently some differences in their accounts are inevitable. This consideration, however, does not minimize the comparative value of the two traditions. The noted western indologist Keith shows scepticism about the historical value of the Purāṇas and wonders at the "naïve credulity" of those who believe in the historicity of any event not explicitly mentioned in the Vedas.⁸⁷ This is a meaningless observation.

It may be noted that the Purāṇic corpus contains in it not only Vedic trends but even ante-Vedic, non-Vedic and also pre-Vedic trends. It was aimed at expanding the Vedic tradition without ignoring the latter traditions. Though apparently the Purāṇas in their present shape contain a good deal of what is untrustworthy, yet it would be "absurd to suppose that fiction completely ousted the truth." In this context P.V. Kane rightly illustrates the view that; though the rites, ceremonies, usages and religious views on which most of the Purāṇas lay emphasis are different from the Vedic tradition, they do not ignore the Vedic tradition but try hard to build on the foundations of the Vedic tradition.⁸⁸

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We have already noted that the traditional number of (Mahā) Purāṇas is eighteen. However, the point needs elaboration in view of the importance of the totality of the Purāṇa tradition. We are proceeding to do this in the light of the observations of the early scholars. In addition, we are also giving our own hypothetical suggestions, as and when necessary. Early scholars in the present context include P.V. Kane (History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. V, Part II, 829-834); R.C. Hazra (Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, pp. 174-189), Baladeva

Upadhyaya (Purāṇa-Vimarsā, pp. 75-80); A.D. Pusalkar (Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas, pp. 31-41) etc. The traditional number of Purāṇas as eighteen has been enumerated in a number of Purāṇa-texts (Vide, Vishṇu III. 6.21-23; Varāha 112.69-72, Verses 74-77; Liṅga 1.39.61-63; Padma IV. 100. 51-54; Bhaviṣhya 1.1.61-64; Mārkaṇḍeya 134.7-11; Agni 272; Bhāgavata XII. 13.4-8; Vāyu 104. 2-10; Skanda, Prabhāsakhaṇḍa 2. 5-7). About the eighteen names there is no unanimity. The texts of Matsya (53. 18-19), Agni (272.5-6), Nāradiya (1.92.16-28) enumerate the Vāyu as the 4th among the eighteen Purāṇas, while most of the others substitute Śiva Purāṇa as the 4th in place of the Vāyu. The text of Skanda (Prabhāsakhaṇḍa, 2.5,7) puts Śiva as the 4th in place of Vāyu and Vāyaviya as the last. Kane feels that by Vāyaviya, probably Brahmanḍa is meant. Both Upadhyaya and Kane draw our attention to a verse of Devībhāgavata, which gives the names of the eighteen Purāṇas by their first letters. The verse omits the name of Śiva Purāṇa.

(madvayam bhadvayam caiva batrayam vacatusṭayam/
anapaliṅgakūṣkāni purāṇāni pṛithak pṛithak//
Devībhagavata 1, 3.2; madvayam - Matsya, Mārkaṇḍeya;
bhadvayam - Bhaviṣhya, Bhāgavata; batrayam - Brahma,
Brahmavaivarta, Brahmanḍa; Vacatusṭayam - Varāha,
Vishṇu, Vāmana, Vāyu; a, na, pa, liṅga, ga respectively

stand for Agni, Nārādīya, Padma, Liṅga and Garuḍa. The name of Śiva Purāṇa is omitted in the verse. The Sutasamhitā (1.1.7-11) names eighteen Purāṇas omitting Vāyu and putting Śiva Purāṇa in its place. The Saura Purāṇa (9.5-12) enumerates eighteen Purāṇas, placing Vāyu as the 4th and Brahmāṇḍa as the last. It omits Śiva Purāṇa. The Dānasāgara in its introductory verses (11-12) mentions both Vāyavīya and Śaiva separately. The present problem has been intensively analysed by Hazra (ibid, pp. 13-14), Kane (ibid, p. 830-31), and Pusalker (ibid, pp. 31-40). These scholars unanimously contend that, it is the Vāyu that is entitled to be regarded as one of the principal Purāṇas and not the Śiva Purāṇa. We have already noted Alberuni's evidence in this regard. We may reiterate that Alberuni's work on India is known to have been composed around 1038 A.D. It sets out one list of Purāṇas as read out to him from Vishṇu Purāṇa. The list refers to Śiva Purāṇa instead of Vāyu. Kane observes, in view of the above, that the list of eighteen principal Purāṇas had been completed long before 1000 A.D. and was introduced in the Vishṇu Purāṇa many years before that date. Alberuni furnishes another list of the names of eighteen Purāṇas, which was communicated to him. The list enumerates Ādi, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Vāyu, Nanda, Skanda, Āditya, Soma, Sāmba, Brahmāṇḍa, Mārkaṇḍeya,

Tārks̥hya (i.e. Garuḍa), Viṣṇu, Brahma, Bhaviṣhya. Thus, in the present list Vāyu and not Śiva is included. On the whole, however, the list is not dependable. For, some Purāṇas like Adi, Narasiṃha, Nanda, Āditya, Soma and Sāmba described as Upapurāṇas in other works are included and some works like Padma, Bhāgavata, Nāradiya, Agni, Liṅga and Brahmavaivarta unanimously declared to be Mahāpurāṇas are omitted.

It has been noticed that the total number of verses in the Purāṇas according to the figures furnished by most Purāṇas comes to 400600 slokas. This closely agrees with the total of four lakhs assigned to the Purāṇas in the texts of Matsya (53.3-11) and Padma (V.1.45-52) (tadārtho'tra caturlakṣham saṃkṣhepeṇa niveśitam, Purāṇāni daśaśṭau ca sāmpratam tadihocyate). But the position is quite different so far as the extant texts of the Purāṇas are concerned. Thus, Viṣṇu Purāṇa is said to have contained 23.000 ślokas, while the extant text has hardly 6000 ślokas. IN the same way the extent of the Kūrma is said to be 17000 or 18000 slokas, but the extant Kūrma has hardly 6000 ślokas. The number of ślokas of the Brahma is said to be 25000, but the extant printed text of Brahma contains about 14000 verses. The text of Skanda is said to contain

81000 ślokas, but the extant printed text of Skanda contains several thousand more. The Bhavishya Purāṇa (Brahmaṣarva, 1.104-105) states that all Purāṇas had originally 12000 verses each but their extent increased by addition of tales, so that Skanda was inflated of one lakh of ślokas and the Bhavishya to 50000 ślokas.

It has been further noticed that the order in which the Purāṇas are enumerated is not quite uniform. Most of the Purāṇas put the Brahma⁸⁹ in the first place and set out the order as under :

(1) Brahma, (2) Padma, (3) Viṣṇu, (4) Vāyu, (5) Bhāgavata, (6) Nāradiya, (7) Mārkaṇḍeya, (8) Agni, (9) Bhavishya, (10) Brahmavaivarta, (11) Liṅga, (12) Varāha, (13) Skanda, (14) Vāmana, (15) Kūrma, (16) Matsya, (17) Garuḍa, (18) Brahmāṇḍa. The Skanda (Prabhāsakhaṇḍa 2.8-9) puts the Brahmāṇḍa in the first place. The Vāmana⁹⁰ regards Matsya as the foremost among the Purāṇas. Contents of all the eighteen Purāṇas are mentioned in Matsya (Chapter 53), Agni (Chapter 272), Nāradiya (Chapters from 1.92.30-43 to 1.109). There is unanimity among the Purāṇas in respect of the names of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas. However, in some of them Vāyu Purāṇa is substituted by Śiva Purāṇa. The substitution is a later

interpolation. It is noteworthy that Bālamabhaṭṭa, who flourished in the later half of 18th century states in his commentary on the Mitāksharā (on ṛg̃naṅvalkyasaṁhitā, 1.3) that the Vāyavīya Purāṇa is also called Śaiva.

There is no doubt about the fact that for the study of socio-religious trends and traditions at the various stages of Indian history, the Upapurāṇas are as important as the Mahāpurāṇas. In this connection attention has been drawn to the evidence to Matsya Purāṇa,⁹¹ which relates that the upapurāṇas are mere subsections (upabhedā) of the Purāṇas and propounds the theory that any Purāṇic work which will be found to be 'different' (prithak) from the eighteen Purāṇas must be known to have originated from one or other of these Purāṇas.⁹² This theory had gained much publicity. Thus, the Skanda Purāṇa verbatim reproduces it.⁹³ The Nibandhakāras refer to or reproduce the lines of the Matsya Purāṇa in explaining the origin and nature of the different Upapurāṇas.⁹⁴ Hazra has traced out two verses in the extant Saura Purāṇa, which lend strong support to the above theory and calls the Upapurāṇas more supplement (khila) to the principal Purāṇas and attaches itself in that capacity to the Brahma Purāṇa.⁹⁵ Despite the wide acceptance

of this theory, an examination of the Upapurāṇas themselves shows that these works do not often look upon this theory with the same respect as the principal Purāṇas or other works do. In most cases the upapurāṇas style themselves simply 'Purāṇa' and not 'Upapurāṇa.' They proceed to pass on their own merit and do not care to attach themselves for the sake of authority to any of the principal Purāṇas. This is the case with the Narasiṃha Purāṇa, Devī Purāṇa, Kālikā Purāṇa and many others. Sometimes, they declare their claim of being principal Purāṇa. Thus, in its Vāyaveda^{14a}-saṃhitā (1.1.41) the Śiva Purāṇa lays claim to the position of principal Purāṇa. It also states that the Devībhāgavata (1.3.16) includes the Bhāgavata Purāṇa among the upapurāṇas, obviously in order to establish its own claim to the status of a Purāṇa. The Kālikā Purāṇa claims to be the real Bhāgavata Purāṇa. This, according to Hazra, is probably because of its dealing with the exploits of Bhagavatā.⁵⁶

The older of the extant Upapurāṇas like Devīpurāṇa, Narasiṃhapurāṇa and Sāmbapurāṇa do not give any list of Upapurāṇas. Also, they do not seem to be familiar with their common title 'Upapurāṇa.' Likewise they do not refer to the theory of their origin making them mere supplements to the principal Purāṇas. As *has noticed there is disagreement between* Hazra, the time-honoured theory and the actual practice of the Upapurāṇas, especially of the older ones."

Attention has been drawn to the non-inclusion of the word 'Upapurāṇa' in the Amarakośa which defines 'Purāṇa' as 'pañcalakṣhaṇa' and the mention of the titles of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa etc. without any reference, direct or indirect, to any Upapurāṇa, tend to show that the group of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas had been formed before the Upapurāṇas came into existence.⁹⁷ The above observation is supported by the tradition recorded in the Kūrma Purāṇa (1.1.16), Śiva māhatmya-khaṇḍa of the Sūta saṁhitā of the Skanda Purāṇa (1.12, 13) and Parāśara-upapurāṇa (1.27-28). The said tradition alludes to the composition of the Upapurāṇas by different sages after the eighteen Purāṇas had been completed by Satyavatī-suta, Vyāsa. The tradition thus demanded that the original position of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas and the rigidity of their number should be maintained. Side by side it also needed that the Upapurāṇas should also be given a position. In some extant Purāṇas, these are grouped under the common title 'Upapurāṇas.' In a few cases, they are found to attach themselves as supplements to one or other of the eighteen Purāṇas. As we have noted earlier the Saura Purāṇa calls itself a supplement to the Brahma Purāṇa in the body of the work as well as in the chapter-colophon.⁹⁸ The tendency was also

to call themselves 'Upapurāṇas', despite their independent character. The most pertinent instance of it is Parāśara-Upapurāṇa, a manuscript of which has been described by Eggeling in his India Office Library Catalogue, VI, pp 1229-30 and has also been noticed by Hazra.⁹⁹

We can hardly disagree with the view that from several considerations the Upapurāṇas are more important than the Mahāpurāṇas. The text of the extant Mahāpurāṇas are the results of innumerable changes, modifications and interpolations made in different times under varied types of sectarian pressures. For the reconstruction of history they can be used only after taking adequate precaution. In all probability owing to their secondary position, the Upapurāṇas have been worked upon much less freely by the later redactors. Thus, despite their distinctive sectarian character the Upapurāṇas have; at least in some cases, preserved their older materials. It has to be accepted that among the extant Upapurāṇas there are some which are much older than many of the extant Mahāpurāṇas. They are to be valued as the records of changes undergone in different ages by the respective sects to which these works originally belonged. It has been rightly observed that the Upapurāṇa works consist of a large number

of works of which some are available in printed forms, some exist in manuscripts, some are known only from references and quotations, and some have perished altogether without leaving any trace of their existence.¹⁰⁰

In addition to what has been said above, highlighting the notes and observations of the early scholars, it may be emphasized that :

- (a) the Purāṇa tradition has to be valued for the reconstruction of various aspects of socio-cultural and political history of India,
- (b) despite their independent character in many cases and at several issues, the Upapurāṇas should be treated as part of Purāṇa tradition,
- (c) the evidence of this tradition has its worth in the totality of its account; one single text of the Mahāpurāṇa group or of the Upapurāṇa group may not be of much use for portraying an overall picture of the past,
- (d) the historical elements accumulated in this tradition is of the nature of omnium-gatherum; the trustworthiness of which can scarcely be held in doubt, though sometimes and in a few cases it has to be checked and balanced by the external evidences.

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POSITION OF GIRLS

There is considerable substance in the observation of the sociologists that in ancient times in all patriarchal societies birth of a girl was generally considered as an unwelcome and unpleasant event. Since the son was a permanent asset to the family, he was valued more than the daughter. He was a caretaker of the parents in their old age. The daughter migrated to another family after her marriage. This was not the case with the son. He was bearer of the name and tradition of family to the future generations. The son ^{was} ~~as~~ considered to be capable of protecting the family or attacking an enemy. It was felt that the daughter has no fighting value whatever. Following Westermarch, the sociologist, Altekar observes that the primitive man could not take a long view of the situation that women have potential military value in the sense that by giving birth to sons they contribute indirectly to the fighting strength and efficiency of their community. He found the woman a handicap rather than a help. Altekar further observes that in India too in the early times the daughter was not as welcome as the son. Quoting Geieger on the present point, the noted scholar shows that this tendency prevailed even in the Indo-Iranian age¹, and the same was the case in the Vedic period. In this connection reference has been made to the passages of Atharvaveda, which

contain charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in preference to that of a daughter.² Kane notices that this rite was called caturthīkarma, and while performing this rite the husband had to murmur several other verses in this strain 'may a male embryo enter thy womb as an arrow into the quiver; may a man be born here, a son, after ten months.'³

Coming to the Purāṇic evidence on the above issue; the details may be gathered in the saṁskāra called Pūṣavana which was performed with the purpose of getting male issue. The Vishṇu Purāṇa^{3A} and Matsya Purāṇa⁴ relate that Kaśyapa had sexual intercourse with Diti for procuring a Valiant son. According to the texts of Vāyu Purāṇa⁵ and Brahmāṇḍa⁶ Purāṇa, the Yādava king Devavṛidha had performed the rite with a view to getting a talented son. A number of vows and regular practices are mentioned in the Purāṇas for procuring a male issue. According to Garuḍa Purāṇa, a son has to be got by some means or other. There is no final peaceful way for a person who has no sons, and never heaven.^{6A} The text of Skanda Purāṇa states that a person, who has no son, is not fit to be invited on auspicious occasions

or in the rite of the manes.⁷ The same Purāṇa further ordains that the houses of those who have no sons resemble funeral grounds, the manes, deities along with sages do not partake of meals at such places.⁸ The text also refers to Bhīṣmapañcakavrata. A sonless person is advised to perform this vow along with his wife, if he desires to get a son within a year. As a part of this vow, a pāpapurusha (an effigy of "sin") is to be given away. Obviously, the pāpa indicates the hindrance to get issues.⁹ The texts of classical Sanskrit literature reveal similar state of affairs. We may illustrate here some passages of the works of Kālidāsa. As noted by B.S. Upadhyaya, Kālidāsa has dwelt long on the importance of a son.¹⁰ In course of eight verses in the first canto of Raghuvamśa, the poet has shown the emptiness of the life of a son-less person. It relates that the forefathers do not accept with delight their shares in the obsequies performed by a son-less descendant due to the anxiety of their losing them in the next generation.¹¹ Their sighs of grief render hot the libation of water offered to them by their descendants.¹² The extinction of the male line is a great misfortune, for the merits resulting from the austerities and alms are for the happiness in the next world, but the son begotten on the wife of pure blood is indeed the cause of happiness both here and hereafter.¹³

A graphic description of the situation can be gleaned from Abhijñānśakuntalam, where Dushyanta expresses lamentable words about his being a sone-less father; "Alas ! The participators of the rice-cakes offered by Dushyanta have reached a dubious situation. For, surely of the water offered by me, destitute of progeny the forefathers drink what is left after washing their tears brought forth by the thought - "Alas, who after in our race, this person will do the libations, prepared according to the Śrutis."¹⁴

There are, however, evidences to show that the birth of daughter was not as unwelcome as is commonly supposed. In this connection, Altekar draws our attention to a ritual mentioned in the Bṛihadārṇyaka Upanishad recommending to a house-holder for ensuring the birth of a scholarly daughter.^{14A} It has been rightly observed that this ritual did not become as popular as the Pūmsavana one, prescribed for procuring the birth of a son; but it clearly shows that cultured parents were often as anxious for daughters as they were for sons.¹⁵ On the basis of Samyutta Nikāya (III. 2, 6), it is contended that some thinkers have pointed out that a talented and well behaved daughter may be better than a son.¹⁶ As regards the Purāṇas, following illustrations

are of special note. The text of Matsya Purāṇa makes reference to Aśvapati, the Madra king. It is stated that he procured his daughter Sāvitrī, consequent upon his constant devotion to the goddess.¹⁷

The said Purāṇa relates the story of Devayānī. She was the beloved daughter of Śukra. Once she was insulted by the daughter of Vṛishaparvā. This raised the anger of Śukra who compelled Vṛishaparvā to send his daughter in the service of Devayānī to perform the work of a slave.¹⁸ In the Vishṇu Purāṇa, there is an interesting legend revealing the affection of the father to his daughters. It is related that the devout sage Saubhari, who was well versed in the Vedas had spent twelve years immersed in a piece of water. The spot was abode of Samvada, the sovereign of the fish. He had a very numerous progeny. His children and grandchildren were wont to frolic around him in all directions. He lived amongst them happily, playing with them night and day. The sage Saubhari was inspired by this scene. He wished to taste such pleasure. Having thus resolved, the sage came hastily from the water. Desirous of entering upon the condition of a householder, he went to Māndhātṛi to demand one of his daughters as his wife. He put his proposal before the king, who felt disposed to refuse his consent.

But dreading to incur the anger and imprecation of the sage, he was much perplexed. Ultimately the king came to learn that, all his daughters were willing to choose the sage for their husband. Although with extreme reluctance, he was obliged to agree that the sage should marry all his daughters. After wedding them agreeably to law, the sage took them to his habitation. It is narrated that the sage employed the chief architect Visvakarman to construct separate palaces for each of his wives. The divine architect constructed splendid apartments for them. The text alludes that affection of the king to his daughters did not wane. His heart yearned for his daughters, and he left solicitous to know whether they were happily circumstanced.¹⁹ In connection with the *saddhāras* or perpetual obligation of a householder, the Vishnu Purāṇa relates that he must provide food for his married daughter remaining at her father's dwelling, and then he may eat himself. He who eats first without feeding her is guilty of sin.²⁰ Reference is made in the text of Vishnu Purāṇa to the maiden called Mārishā. It is narrated that the sovereign Soma himself had nourished her with his grays. She has been put in the category of gem.²¹ Similarly Revatī, who was later on wedded to Balarāma, the wielder of ploughshare, is called 'virgin gem' in the same text.²² The daughter who is

endowed with ^śīla or virtue is considered to be better than a son. Thus, Matsya Purāṇa relates that a daughter who is not destitute of śīla is equal to ten sons.²³ Similar observation is made in Padma Purāṇa, which enjoins that a daughter who is possessed of śīla is auspicious and equal to ten sons.²⁴ The Vishṇudharma (upa) purāṇa refers to a girl named Śīladhanā. She was married to the Haihaya king Kṛtavīrya. She was considered to be fit for observing ananta-vrata.²⁵ In the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa, seller of daughter has been condemned. The text reveals that, such action was considered to be a social crime.²⁶ On the basis of the references of Rāmāyaṇa, Altekar points out that goddess of Fortune was regarded as residing in the person of the unmarried daughter; so she and not the unmarried boy, was regarded as an object of good men. Unmarried girls were, therefore, among the persons selected to receive Rāma on his return to Ayodhyā from his long exile and to offer him the coronation ablution. Rāma is stated to have received this religious bath first at the hands of unmarried girls and then of his trusted generals and ministers.^{26A} Attention may here be drawn to some passages of the Devībhāgavata for almost a similar information. The text refers to king Kuśadhvaṇa. He had a daughter named Vedavatī. She was considered as a part of Lakshmi reborn. She

was versed in the ^{Vedic Lore} ~~lore~~ from her very birth. With a view to pleasing Nārāyaṇa, she is stated to have practised austerities first at Pushkara and then on the Gandhamādana mountain.²⁷ There is also reference to king Dharmadhvaṇa. His daughter is named as Tulsī. She is said to have been born as part of Lakshmi. She practised austerities at Pushkara.²⁸

The text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa depicts an interesting story with regard to the desire of a father to see the face of his daughter who did not come out of the womb of her mother for a pretty long time. It so happened that the queen of Kāśīrāja conceived. She was quick with a daughter. But, when the time of delivery arrived she did not come out of the womb. Twelve years passed away, and still the girl was unborn. Then Kāśīrāja spoke to the child and said, 'Daughter, why is your birth thus delayed? Come forth; I desire to behold you, why do you inflict this protracted suffering upon your mother? Thus addressed, the infant answered, "If father, you will present a cow every day to the Brāhmaṇas, I shall at the end of three years more be born". The king accordingly presented a cow daily to the Brāhmaṇas and at the end of three years the damsel came into the world. Her father called her "Gāndinī", as for her sake every day (dina) a cow was given (gam + dina = gāndhinī).²⁹

It has been rightly observed that the passages of early texts, showing that the birth of daughter was an unwelcome event, were a natural result of the greater anxiety which the parents felt for her well-being and happiness. Once the temporary feeling of disappointment was over, the family took as keen an interest in the daughter as it did in the son. On the basis of Āpastamba Gṛhya Sūtra (XVI. 12-13) it is stated that on his return from a journey the father used to recite a mantra for the welfare of his daughter just with the same solicitude as he did for the happiness of his son.³⁰ As regards the Purāṇic evidence on the point we may illustrate two references from the text of Liṅga Purāṇa. Thus, in connection with Indradyumna, king of Avanti, it is stated that he worshipped seven Brāhmaṇas for the welfare of his daughter whose marriage was due.³¹ At another place the text explains the meaning of the word putrī on the lines of definition of the word putra. The word is explained as a girl who saves her parents from the hell called "put".³²

It has been observed that, although the feeling of dejection and dissatisfaction at the birth of a daughter was a fleeting one, it did not lead to female infanticide in ancient India.³³ It has also been shown that the most important passage on which

some European scholars like Zimmer and Delbrück rely upon for this proposition is a passage of *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (V. 5. 10. 3), which has been translated as under, "they go to the *avabhṛitha* (the final sacrificial bath); they keep aside the *sthālīs* and take up the vessels for *Vāyu*; therefore they (the people) keep aside the girl when she is born and lift up (i.e. greet with pride and joy) the son."³⁴ It has been pointed out that the passage under reference has its indication to the traditional habit of Hindu midwives of keeping the child aside on the ground if it was a daughter and of lifting it up in joy if it was a son. The passage has no reference to the abandonment of unwanted daughters. It has been noted that, if female infanticide had at all been practised, it must have been confined to a very small section of society. If the evil had been fairly common, *Smṛiti* writers would certainly have denounced it very vehemently. When we note how eloquent they grew in condemning the conduct of a father who would accept bride-price for his daughter in marriage, we can not but conclude that they would have consigned to the most dreadful hell those parents who were guilty of exposing their daughters at birth because they were unwelcome. *Smṛiti* writers regard the destruction of an embryo as the most heinous crime; the murder of a child

born alive could not have escaped their thundering denunciation.³⁵

Now, we proceed to evaluate Purāṇic evidence on the present problem. The Purāṇa tradition reveals a similar state of affairs. Thus, the text of Matsya Purāṇa categorically denounces a person who destroys an embryo and equates this act with the killing of a Brāhmaṇa.³⁶ The text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa enjoins that such persons or even those who are in contact with them go to hell.³⁷ According to Brahmāṇḍa Purana, the removal of this sin is not possible even by austerity.³⁸ In this context Liṅga Purāṇa refers to an ātreṇī, i.e., a woman in menstruation. The text relates that, to kill her is to incur the sin of Brāhmaṇa killing.³⁹

The passages of Purāṇas reveal that care was taken even of those girls who were of unusual births. They were popularly known as ayoniḡā. Some illustrations may be given here. Thus, the Brahmvaivarta Purāṇa alludes to the story of a girl called Vṛindā. She was born from fire-altar. She became daughter of king Kedāra. She was considered to be a digit of Lakshmī, the lotus-born.⁴⁰ The same text relates the story of Kalāvati, who is said to have been born from the fire-altar at

Kānyakubja. King Bhanandana got her at the end of the sacrifice as she came out of the altar, naked and smiling, in the form of a child yet in the milk-sucking stage of life. His wife, Mālāvātī took the girl to her bosom.⁴¹ The text of Skanda Purāṇa alludes to the account of king Ākāśa, the son of Mitravarman. It is said that, while ploughing he found a girl named Padminī. The girl was brought up by the said king. Later on she was married to ^{Srinivasa} ~~Srinivasa~~.⁴² These instances tend to suggest that infanticide or exposure of girls was never practised in ancient India.

The Purāṇa-texts also refer to the types and categories of girls in different contexts. They are named variously in accordance with the consideration of their age. Thus, the text of Skanda Purāṇa applies the epithet Gaurī to a girl of seven years.⁴³ Similar information is supplied by Saṃskāra Prakāśa.⁴⁴ In some texts the age is extended by one year and a damsel of eight years is called Gaurī.⁴⁵ The epithet nagnikā was applied to a girl of nine years.⁴⁶ The word nagnikā has been interpreted in different ways by the Dharmasāstras and the commentaries written on them. Thus, Mātridatta on Hiranya-keśī Grihyasūtra (1.19.2) explains that nagnikā means one whose menstrual period is near. Ashtavakra, the commentator of Mānava Grihyasūtra

(1.7.8) explains nagnikā as one who has not yet experienced the impulses and emotions of youth' or 'one who looks pretty even without clothes.' Grihyasaṃgraha quoted in commentary on Gobhila Grihyasūtra (III, 46.) explains 'nagnikā' as one who has not yet reached puberty. Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra (17.70) says 'the father should give away his daughter while she is still nagnikā through fear of her attaining puberty (while unmarried).' It has been observed that, this shows that according to Vasishṭha nagnikā must have been a girl of tender years or one that had not attained puberty.^{46A} It may be added that āṭikī of the Vedic account was the same as the nagnikā of the above description. Reference to āṭikī is available in the Chandogya-Upanishad. It is narrated that Uśatī Cākrāyaṇa was residing in the Kuru country with his wife. She is said to have been āṭitī. Commenting upon the concerned passage of the text Saṃkara explains āṭitī as 'a mere undeveloped girl.'⁴⁷ Other categories of girls are mentioned as Rohiṇī, Kanyā and Vṛishalī. A girl of nine years is called Rohiṇī, while one of ten years is called Kanyā in Skanda Purana.^{47A} A girl who reached the 'period' and actually witnessed menstruation was named Vṛishalī. The person who married such a girl was termed Vṛishalī-pati. There are two such passages in Skanda Purāṇa, where father

of Vṛishalī girl has been condemned. In one passage he is branded as bhrūṇahā, i.e. destroyer of embryo or killer of foetus.⁴⁸ In the other one under similar circumstances, the father is denounced as brahmahan, i.e. brāhmaṇa-killer.⁴⁹ Similarly the text Viṣṇu Purāṇa prescribes that, a person protects the issue of a Vṛishalī or one who is husband of a Vṛishalī should not be invited on the occasion of the ceremony of the manes.⁵⁰

There is also reference to the type of girls called Visha-kanyā or poison-girls. In this connection the text of Devī Purāṇa depicts an interesting story. It is stated that the demon Dundubhi who, for his lust for Śiva's wife Uma, was burnt to ashes by Śiva. From these ashes was born the demon Ghora. He was to reign supreme in Kuśa-dvīpa and was to be killed by Devī mounted on a lion when this Ghora would try to have her as his wife. In order to check the demon from this evil designs, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva deputed Nārada to Kuśa-dvīpa for turning Ghora and his wife and subjects from the path of dharma. Ghora forsook the path of dharma and turned a debauch. In order to bring Ghora to his senses, Ghora's wife Candramatī gave him good counsels by referring to the policies of statecraft and to the dangers from poison-girls (Visha-kanyā) and others

including washer women (rajakī) fisherwomen (kaivartī) etc.⁵¹ The common belief was that, a girl who has been administered poison from childhood in regular quantity becomes a poison-girl. The text of Skanda Purāṇa relates that a girl who is born when the Sun is in the Citrā constellation, or when moon is seen on the 14th dark of a month is called "poison-girl." It is stated that a person who marries her is sure to die within sixth months, and the place wherein she is born gets ruined within six months.⁵²

The Purāṇa-passages reveal the practice of gifts of girls to illustrious personages. In this connection, the text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa relates how Jāmbavat prostrated before Kṛiṣṇa and presented to him his daughter Jāmbavatī, as an offering to a suitable guest.⁵³ In the same text, it is said of Swapalka, the father of Akūrā, that wherever he dwelt, there famine, plague, death and other visitations were unknown. Once there was no rain in the kingdom of Kāśirāja. Swapalka was brought there, and immediately there fell rain from the heavens. The text relates that Swapalka was honoured by Kāśirāja who offered his daughter Gāndinī to him.⁵⁴ Gift of a girl is extolled in a number of other Purāṇas. Thus the text of Brahma Purāṇa enjoins that, those who make gift of their daughter to a

suitable bride-groom after decorating her with ornament attain heaven.⁵⁵ According to Śīva Purāṇa, the gift of a daughter bestows all pleasures to the giver.⁵⁶ There are also references to the effect that, gift of the girls were made on special occasions. Thus in Brahma Purāṇa Avantirāja Indradyumna is said to have given one hundred and five maidens, well decorated, on the conclusion of horse-sacrifice.⁵⁷ The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa narrates that king Janaka had made gift of girls along with villages, gems and gold to the Brāhmaṇas on the occasion of horse-sacrifice.^{57A} The text of Śīva Purāṇa enjoins that a person may employ his daughter in the worship of Śīva, and he should give her to a devotee of Śīva, not to any one else.⁵⁸

The text of Skanda Purāṇa refers to the gifts of slave-girls.⁵⁹ In its Lalitopakhyāna section, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa refers to four types of slave-girls. These are as under; Devadāsī, i.e., temple-girl, Brahmadāsī, i.e., a girl with a Brāhmaṇa, Svatantrā, i.e., free-lancing and Śūdradāsī, i.e., a girl of the Śūdra varṇa or one with a Śūdra. It is stated that the first two have the status of a Kshatriya woman, the other two are said to be on par with prostitutes.⁶⁰ The text of Śīva Purāṇa states that

the temple girls are created by Viśvakarmā. The purpose of their creation is to render service to Śiva with songs and dances and various other arts. They are said to be beautiful and endowed with prosperity. On festival occasions Śiva is said to be surrounded by these girls.⁶¹ It has been observed that the Devadāsī institution was allied to that of gaṇikā. These girls were maintained in the great temples for the worship of the gods. Such girls were kept at the great temple of Mahākāla at Ujjayini in days of Kālidasa.⁶² Hiuen Tsang reports the maintenance of Devadāsīs at a shrine of Sun-god in a city east of Sindh.⁶³ As regards Brahmadāsī of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa's description noted above, mention may be made of an account available in kātyāyanasmṛiti-sāroddhāra, which refers to the purchase or sell of a Brāhmaṇa as a slave. The text enjoins that the king should ^{annul} ~~annul~~ that transaction and all persons (concerned in it) should be fined by him.⁶⁴ The Brahmadāsī may be interpreted in the light of the above account. So far as the slave girl of Swatantrā category is concerned, the reference is perhaps to the type of slave who ~~is~~ sells herself of one's own accord. Nārada-smṛiti declares that this is the worst type.⁶⁵ With regard to Sūdradāsī, a reference of Nārada-smṛiti may be quoted here. The smṛitikāra accords permission to a Sūdra for

becoming slave of a Kshatriya, but forbids a kshatriya for becoming slave of Śūdra.⁶⁶

Next, we proceed to take into account Purāṇic passages on Daughter's right to property. Before doing this, it would be proper to highlight Dharmaśāstric view on the point. It has been observed that, the Gautama Dharmasūtra, Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra and Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra omit the daughter as an heir.⁶⁷ Āpastamba Dharmasūtra recognizes the daughter as an optional heir.⁶⁸ Manu-smṛiti declares that "one's son is like oneself and one's daughter is equal to one's self and one's daughter is equal one's son; how can another person take the wealth (of the deceased) when she who is the very self (of the deceased) lives."⁶⁹ This practice may even be traced back to the Vedic period. Thus in the R̥gveda Ushā has been compared to a maiden who inherits the property of her father in the absence of brothers.⁷⁰

As far the Purāṇas, ~~we~~ reference may be made here to the Purāṇic legend relating to the syamantaka gem. Thus, the Vishṇu Purāṇa narrates that the divine Āditya, the sun was a friend of king Satrājī~~t~~ of the Yādava lineage. Satrājī~~t~~ received the syamantaka~~gem~~ from the divinity. Having gone to his house, there

deposited the jewel, which daily yielded eight loads of gold, and through its marvellous virtue dispelled all fear of pot~~ents~~^{ents}, wild beasts, fire, robbers and famine. The precious gem in due course turned to be a bone of contention amongst the Yādavas. The Purāṇa narrative refers to the right of śatyabhāmā, the daughter of Satrājit. In the assembly of the Yādavas, Kṛishṇa announced that the syamantaka-gem was the patrimonial inheritance of Satyabhāmā. It is noteworthy that in the entire legend there is no reference to any brother of Satyabhāmā.⁷¹ This situation accords well with the Dharmasāstric injunction, which permits daughter's right to father's estate in the absence of sons. There is yet another Purāṇa legend, which reveals that paternal property could be claimed only by a brotherless girl. On the other hand a girl having brothers could not claim such property. In this context, the texts of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa and Vāyu Purāṇa narrate that Manu desirous of sons, offered a sacrifice for that purpose to Mitra and Varuna. But the rite being deranged, through an irregularity of the ministering priest, a daughter named Ilā was produced. Through the favour of the two divinities, however, her sex was changed, and she became a man, named Sudyumna. At a subsequent period, in consequence of becoming subject to the effects of a malediction

once pronounced by Śiva, Sudyumna was again transformed to a woman in the vicinity of the hermitage of Budha, the son of the deity of the Moon. Budha saw and espoused her. He had a son named Purūravas by her. After his birth the sages, desirous of restoring Sudyumna to his sex prayed to Viṣṇu. Through his favour Ilā once more became Sudyumna. It is narrated that in consequence of his having been ^{originally} a female, Sudyumna was excluded from any share in his paternal dominions.⁷²

Above, we have noted the observation of Altekar that goddess of Fortune was regarded as residing in the person of the unmarried daughter. We have also illustrated Purāṇic evidences in support. There are yet a number of references in the Purāṇas to the effect that virgin girls were honoured on festival occasions. Thus, in connection with dhvaja-dāna in Devī-temples the text of Devī Purāṇa relates that on this occasion virgin girls along with Brāhmaṇas should be fed.⁷³ The text gives an account of Sarvamaṅgalā aspect of Devī. It states that the Devī should be worshipped in a maṇḍala from Krishṇāṣṭamī to Śukla-navamī in the month of Āśvina with different names like Maṅgalā, Bhairavī, Durgā, Kanyā, kapālī, Kaiṭabheśvarī, Kālī, Carcā etc. It ordains that, on this occasion Virgin girls should

be fed.⁷⁴ Nandā Vrata, Vijayā Vrata and Nakshatra Vrata were observed in the twelve months with effect from Śāvaṇa. It is mentioned that in these vratas Brāhmaṇas, women and virgin girls should be fed.⁷⁵ A passage of Devī Purana quoted in Durgā-bhakti Tarāṅgiṇī (pp. 100-10) and Varaha kaumudī (pp. 376, 447) mentions that on Śūklā-saptamī, Navamī and Caturdaśī Tithis worship of virgin girls (kumārī-pūjā) should be performed. Feasts should be given to them. These virgin girls should place akshata on the head of the giver of the feast. In its chapters 60-63, written on devī-tantra, the text of Kalikā Purāṇa lays down the methods of autumnal worship of Devī. Among various operations on this occasion it also includes feeding of virgin girls. The text of Devī bhāgavata mentions a number of qualifications of virgin girls eligible for worship, and restrictions as regards their castes in case of Brāhmaṇa, kshatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra worshippers. Birth in a high family is one of the disqualifications for the girls to be worshipped.^{75A}

Purāṇic passages also reveal the extent of education of girls in various contexts. In this connection, Altekar observes that, down to about the 3rd century B.C. girls could remain unmarried till the age of 16; and this period was utilised

for imparting education to them. Attention has also been drawn to the fact that, till about the beginning of the Christian era Upanayana or the ceremonial initiating into Vedic studies was as common in the case of girls as it was in the case of boys. The initiation ceremony was followed by a period of discipline and education, which was regarded as very essential to secure a suitable match. The tradition required that a maiden can succeed in her marriage only if she has properly been trained during the period of studenthood (brahmacharya, brahmacharyeṇa kanyāṁ yuvāṁ vindate patim. Atharvaveda, X 1.5, 18). That women are ineligible for Vedic studies is the view of later times. In early periods lady poets themselves were composing hymns. The tradition recorded in Sarvānu-kramaṇikā, relates that there are as many as twenty women among the 'seers' or authors of Ṛigveda. Internal evidence shows that Lopāmudrā, Viśvavārā, Sikatā Nivāvarī and Ghoshā were authors of the Ṛigveda, 1.179; V. 28; VIII. 91; IX. 81, 11-20; and X. 39 and 40 respectively. Among the authors and scholars to whose memory a daily tribute of respect is enjoined to be paid at the time of brahmayajña, a few ladies also are seen to figure. In the Āśvalāyana Gṛihya Sūtra (III. 4, 4) they are recorded as Sulabhā Maitreyā, Vaḍavā, Pratitheyī and Gārgī Vāchakanavi.

It is quite natural to believe that these ladies must have made real contributions to the advancement of knowledge and scholarship, otherwise their names would not have been recommended by posterity for all time to come. Their works are, however, not available.⁷⁶

In the light of the above observation we may illustrate here some Purāṇa passages alluding to the names of girls, reputed for their being scholars. Some of them were also known for their Yogic practices, and severe penances. Such names are as under :

Menā and Dhārinī : Their account is available in the texts of Vishṇu Purāṇa,⁷⁷ Vāyu Purāṇa⁷⁸ and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.⁷⁹ Reference is made in this account to the progeny of the daughters of Dakṣa. It is mentioned that Swaahā had two daughters, namely, Menā and Dhārinī. It is narrated that both these maidens were acquainted with theological truth, both were addicted to religious meditation, and both were accomplished in perfect wisdom. For 'theological truth' and original expression used in the text is 'brāhmavādinī'. It has been observed that women students were divided into two classes, brāhmavādinīs and Sadyodvāhās. The former were life-

long students of theology and philosophy. The latter used to prosecute their studies till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16. During the eight or nine years that were thus available to them for study, they used to learn by heart the Vedic hymns prescribed for the daily and periodical prayers and for those rituals and sacraments in which they had to take an active part after their marriage. In this connection a passage of Rāmāyaṇa has been quoted, which describes that Sītā offered her daily Vedic prayers (V. 15. 48). Brahmagādīnī used to aim at a very high excellence in scholarship. Besides studying the Vedas, many of them used to specialise in Pūrvamīmāṃsā, which discussed the diverse problems connected with Vedic sacrifices.⁸⁰

Dhuvanā : The narrative of Dhuvanā is available in the texts of Vāyu Purāṇa⁸¹ and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.⁸² She is stated to have been a sister of Bṛihaspati. She is styled as "brahmagādīnī", who had accomplished yogic practices. It is also narrated that, she had travelled throughout the world. In another context, the text of Vāyu Purāṇa relates that a student, after taking permission of his teacher should make a tour of the entire world, which helps in acquiring the essence of knowledge.⁸³

Aparṇā, Ekaparṇā and Ekapāṭalā : Reference to these maidens is made in the texts Vāyu Purāṇa⁸⁴ and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.⁸⁵ They are styled as 'brahmavādinī' and 'brahmacāriṇī'.

Sannati : Her reference is available in the text of Matsya Purāṇa.⁸⁶ It is related that she turned to be a 'brahmavādinī', because of her being occupied with her father's works. Probably the Purāṇa-author intends here to convey the idea that Sannati acquired the knowledge of theology from her father. There was no doubt practice of the children being taught in their own house by their father. In this connection we may quote a passage of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, which relates the story of a Brāhmaṇa named Śivadatta, who trained his sons in all the branches of Vedas.⁸⁷ This tradition may^{be} traced back to the Vedic period. Thus, the Chāndogya-Upanishad relates that Āruṇi imparted to his son the subtle elements of philosophy.⁸⁸

Śatarūpā : She is a well-known maiden of Purāṇa tradition. An additional information is supplied by the text of Matsya Purāṇa, where in she is described as 'brahmavādinī'.⁸⁹

Vedavati : Above we have made reference to Vedavati, daughter of king Kuśadhvaṇa. In the present

context it may be mentioned that the text of Devībhāgavata describes that she was considered to be versed in the Vedic lore from her very birth. With a view to pleasing Nārāyaṇa she practised austerities first at Pushkara and then on the Gandhamādana mountain, where she was touched perforce by Rāvaṇa. Vedavatī cursed Rāvaṇa to be destroyed for her sake, and left her body by means of Yogic power.⁹⁰

Maitreyī, Sulabhā, Gārgī and Śāṇḍilī : According to the text of Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa these maidens attained success in Yoga. The text also asserts that the proper practice of Yoga is sure to lead one of any caste or sex to final release.⁹¹

Pīvarī : The story of Pīvarī is available in the text of Matsya Purāṇa. The text relates that she was mind-born daughter of the manes. She is said to have been well versed in the knowledge of Yoga. She practised severe ^{penances} ~~penance~~s.⁹²

Next, we are proceeding to evaluate Purāṇa-passages with regard to the proficiency of the girls in music, dancing and painting. Altekar observes that cultivation of these fine arts in case of girls

was encouraged since very early times. Musical recitation of the Sāma hymns was originally the special function of the ladies. It is clear that they must be specialising in music in the early Vedic period; otherwise this important duty would not have been assigned to them. Some legends in the Vedic literature make caustic references to women's partiality to music. Thus, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (II. 2. 4.6) describes that once Devas and Asuras both wanted to win over the Goddess of speech; gods succeeded in their effort because they were clever enough to realise that the best way to achieve their object was to sing and dance before ^{her} ~~them~~. In the post-Vedic period also society went on encouraging music and dancing in the case of girls. Among the arts which ladies in cultured families were expected to cultivate, the Kāmasūtra assigns the most prominent place to dancing and music, both vocal and instrumental (1, 3, 16). Other arts which they were recommended to master were painting, gardening, garland-making, toy-making, house decorations, etc (1, 3, 1). It is thus evident that care was taken to develop the aesthetic sense of girls.⁹³

As far the Purāṇic references on the point, the texts of Viṣṇu Purāṇa⁹⁴ and Matsya Purāṇa⁹⁵

relate that music and dance of the celestial maidens add to the lustre of Sun's chariot. While describing the splendor of the mythical city of Tripura, the text of Matsya Purāṇa refers to the acting of the maidens, which was a source of recreation of the citizens.⁹⁶ The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that the city, which was made by the prowess of Kāmadhenu for the sage Jamadagni, was resounded with the sound of music of the maidens. Their acting made the people spell-bound. The notes of their songs were as fascinating and delightful as those of the gandharvas. They were proficient in using their fingers to the tune of Vīṇā.⁹⁷ There are references to the observance of dance and music on the occasion of vrata/vows. In the Purāṇic view vrata comprises a rule of behaviour based on tradition.⁹⁸ Vrata and saṅkalpa are stated to go together. A vrata without saṅkalpa remains crippled. Consequently a number of acts and restriction^{were proscribed} during the period for which the vrata is continued. Observance of dance and music was considered to be parts of the vrata.⁹⁹ Thus, the text of Matsya Purāṇa enjoins that on the occasion of Viṣṇu dvādaśī vrata maidens should be engaged in dance and song.¹⁰⁰ Padma Purāṇa refers to rādhāṣṭamī vrata. It was observed in the honour of Rādhā, who was born on the bright

eight of Bhādrapada. On this occasion image of Rādhā was worshipped and dancing and singing of the maidens took place before the image.¹⁰¹ In the honour of Kṛishṇa, aṣṭamī vrata was observed on the dark eight of Bhādrapada. According to Padma Purāṇa, if this day is marked by the presence of the constellation of Rohiṇī, it is an excellent occasion. Provision is also made for the preparation of figure of Rohiṇī and moon-god. Reference is also made of the worship of these figures and singing and dancing by the maidens before them.¹⁰² The text of Skanda Purāṇa refers to the vrata observed on the caturdaśī tithi in the bright Kārttika. On this occasion special worship of Viṣṇu is enjoined. A small pāṇḍāla was to be erected over the ^{Tulsi} ~~Tulasi~~-plant. Near the root of the Tulasi plant, Sarvatobhadra figure was to be drawn. On it a pitcher, with gems inside was to be placed. Inside the pitcher the figure of Viṣṇu having a conch, disc and mace was to be placed and worshipped. It is enjoined that, the whole night should be spent in jāgaraṇa, keeping awake and devotional songs and dances of the maidens should be arranged.¹⁰³ As far proficiency of the girls in painting, an interesting reference to it is available in bāṇāsura legend narrated in Viṣṇu Purāṇa. It is described that the demon Bāṇa had a daughter, named Ushā. Bāṇa was a devotee of Viṣṇu.

It so happened that once Ushā saw Pārvatī sporting with her lord, Śāmbhu, Ushā was inspired with a wish for similar dalliance. Pārvatī, who knows the hearts of all said to Ushā that she should not grieve; the person who will appear to her in a dream on the twelfth lunation of the ~~light~~^{night} half of Vaiśākha will be her husband. Accordingly, as the goddess had foretold on that lunar day a youth appeared to Ushā in a dream, of whose person she became enamoured. When she ~~work~~^{woke}, and no longer perceived him, she was overcome by sorrow. Unrestrained by modesty, she demanded of her companion whither he had gone. The companion and friend of the princess was Chitrālekhā, the daughter of Kubhāṇḍa, the minister of Bāṇa. Usha related to Chitrālekhā what had happened and what the goddess had foretold. She also requested her friend to devise some means of uniting her with the person whom she had beheld in the dream. The narrative projects the proficiency of Chitrālekhā in the art of painting remarkably well. It is stated that, she delineated the most eminent gods, demons, spirits and mortals and showed them to Usha. Putting aside the portraits of gods, spirits, snake-gods, and demons, the princess selected those of mortals, and amongst them the heroes of the races of Andhaka and Vṛishṇi. When she came to the likeness of Kṛishṇa and Rāma, she was confused with shame. From the portrait of Pradyumna she modestly averted her eyes.

But the moment she beheld the picture of his son,
the object of her passion, her eyes wide opened
and all her bashfulness was discarded.¹⁰⁴

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.S. Altekar, The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p. 3; Gfiger, Civilization of the Eastern Iranians, pp. 53-54.
2. Atharvaveda, III, 23, VI. 11.
3. ā te yonim garbha etu pumān bāṇa eveshudhum/
ā vīro'tra jāyatām putraste daśamāsyah//
Atharvaveda, III, 23, 2. This mantra occurs also in Hiranyakeśī-Grihyasūtra, I, 7, 25.1; for details see P. V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 203.
- 3A. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, I, 21, 33-34.
4. Matsya Purāṇa, 7, 36-45.
5. Vāyu Purāṇa, 96. 12.
6. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 71. 12.
- 6A. aputrasya gatiḥ nāsti svargo naiva ca naiva ca/
yena kenapyupāyena putrasya jananañcaret//
Garuḍa Purāṇa, II, 3.10.
7. śubhakarmaṇi vā vipra pāitrike vāpi karmaṇi/
Skanda Purāṇa, II. 1.42.
8. aputrāṇām grīhāpīva śmaśānasadṛśāni hi/
pitarastasya naśnānti devatāḥ ṛishibhiḥ saha//
Skanda Purāṇa, V. 3, 169.17, 18.
9. Yaḥ putrārtham vratam kuryāt śāstriko bhīṣma-

pañcakam pradatvā pāpapurusham varshamadhye
sutam lakṣhet/

ibid, II. 4. 32, 12.

10. B.S. Upadhyaya, India in Kālidāsa, p. 192.
11. nūnam mattaḥ param vamsyāḥ piṇḍavichheda-
darsīnaḥ/na prakāmbhujāḥ śrāddhe svadhāsāṅgra-
hatatparāḥ//
Raghuvamśa, 1, 66.
12. matparaḥ durlabham matvā nūnamāvarjitam mayā/
payāḥ purvaiḥ svaniḥśvāsaiḥ kavashṇamupabhuñ-
jate// ibid 1. 67.
13. so'hamiḥyāvisuddhātmā prajālopanimīlitāḥ/
prakāśāścāprakaśasca lokāloka ivācalaḥ//
lokāntarasukham puṇyam tapodānasamudbhavam/
santatiḥ śuddhavamśyā hiparatreḥ ca śarmaṇe//
Raghuvamśa, 1. 68-69.
14. aho duṣhyantasya saṁśayamāruḍhāpiṇḍabhāṣāḥ,
kutaḥ^h asmatparam vata yathāśrūtisampriti^hāni/
ka naḥ kule nivāpanāni karishyatiti//
nūnam prasūtivikalena mayā prasiktam/
dhautāśśrūṣeshamudakam pitarāḥ pivanti//
Abhijñanasākuntalam, V. 1, 24.
- 14A. atha ya ichhedduhitā me paṇḍitā jāyeta,
tilaudanau pācayitvā asniyātāmiti,
Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad, IV, 4. 18.

15. Altekar, Op Cit., p. 4.
16. Ibid, p. 4.
17. rājanbhakto'si me nityam dāsyāmi tvām sutām
sadā/tām dattām matprasādena prapśyasi
śobhanām//
Matsya Purāṇa, 208.8.
18. Ibid, 29. 1-18.
19. Vishnu Purāṇa, IV, 2.101-111.
20. Ibid, III. 11. 69 ff.
21. Ibid, 1. 15.7.
22. Ibid, IV. 1. 21.
23. daśaputrasamā kanyā yā na syāchhīlavargjitā,
Matsya Purāṇa, 154, 157.
24. daśaputrasamā kanyā ya syāchhīlavatī śubhā,
Padma Purāṇa, Śrishtikhanda, 40. 156.
25. Vishṇudharma, Chapter 30; R.C. Hazra, Studies
in Upa-Purāṇas, Vol. 1, p. 123, n. 42.
26. Devībhagavata, Skandha IX. 4.33.
- 26A. Rāmāyaṇa, VI. 131, 38 and 61; Altekar, Op.
Cit., p. 9.
27. Devībhāgavata, Skandha IX. Chapter 16.
28. Ibid, Chapter 17
29. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 13. 55-56.
30. Altekar, Op. Cit., p. 9.
31. Liṅga Purāṇa, II. 34.
32. punnāmno narakāt trāti iti putrītvihoktitaḥ,
ibid, 1, 5.31.

33. Altekār, Op Cit., p. 7.
34. avabhṛithamavayanti parā sthālīrasyanti
udvāyavyāni haranti tasmāt striyam jātam
parāsyanti utpumānsam haranti.,
Taittiriya Samhitā, VI, 5.10.3; Kane, History
of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 509.
35. Altekār, Op Cit. p. 8.
36. Matsya Purāṇa, 30. 12.
37. Vishṇu Purāṇa, II. 6.9.
38. Brahmanda Purāṇa, II, 23.66.
39. Liṅga Purāṇa, I, 78.18.
40. Branmavaivartta Purāṇa, Śrīkrishṇa janmakhaṇḍa,
86. 21-23.
41. Ibid, 17. 119-122.
42. Skanda Purāṇa, II. 1, 3.22.
43. Ibid, VII. 205, 82-84.
44. Saṃskāra Prakāśā, p. 768.
45. R.B. Pandey, Hindu Samskāras, p. 241.
46. Skanda Purāṇa, VII, 205. 82-84.
- 46A. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1,
p. 441.
47. maṭacīhateshu kurushushātikyā saha jāyayoshastā-
rha cākṛāyaṇa ibhyagrāme pradāpaka uvās/
Chandogya upanishad, 1, 10.1. anupajātāpayodha-
rādistrivyañjanayā - Śaṃkara
- 47A. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 198.37.
48. Ibid, IV. 40. 34-35.

49. Ibid, VII. 166. 19.
50. Vrīshalīsūtipcshṭā vrīshalīpatireva ca,
Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 15.8.
51. Devī Purāṇa, Chapters 4-8.
52. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 61-68.
53. jambavatim nāma kanyām arghyabhūtām
grāhayāmāsa,
Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 13, 55.
54. gāndinīm kanyām ... arghyabhūtām pradāt,
ibid, IV, 13, 125.
55. Brahma Purāṇa, II. 16. 32.
56. kanyādānam tu bhogadam,
Śīva Purāṇa, Vidyaswara saṁhitā, 15. 57.
57. Brahma Purāṇa, 47. 86-87.
- 57A. janakasyāśvamedhe ... grāmaratnāni dāsīṣca,
Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, I, 34. 36-39.
58. Yā tu kanyā svapitrādyaīḥ śīvadharṁ niyojitā/
sā bhaktāya pradātavyā nāparāya virodhine//
Śīva Purāṇa, VII. 2, 15. 66-67.
59. Skanda Purāṇa, V. 1, 53. 23.
60. devadāsī brahmadāsī svatantrā sūdradāsikā/
dāsī caturvidhā proktā dve cānye kshatriyasame//
anyā veśyāṅganātulyā tadanyā hīnajātivat/
Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 4.8, 11-12.
61. Śīva Purāṇa, 1, 2, 8.54; 70-71.
62. U.N. Ghoshal in Classical Age, p. 568.

63. T. Watters, On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, II, p. 254.
64. Kātyāyanasmṛitisāroddhāra quoted by Aparārka, p. 789; for details see Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. III, p. 485.
65. Nārada-Smṛiti, V. 37.
66. IBid, V. 39.
67. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. III, p. 714.
68. Āpastamba Dharmaśūtra, II. 6. 143.
69. Manu Smṛiti, IX. 130.
70. R̥gveda, I. 124.7.
71. mamaivam pitṛidhanamityatīva ca
satyabhāmā'pi spṛihayāñcakara ...
pitṛidhanam caitatsatyabhāmāyā nānysyaitaḍ.
Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 13, 151-54.
72. sudyumnastu ... strīpūrvakādrajyalābham na le²ke
Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 1.15.
kanyābhāvāttu sudyumno nainam bhāgamavapnuyāt.
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 3. 60.21
Vāyu Purāṇa, 85. 21.
73. Devī Purāṇa, Chapter 35
74. IBid, Chapter 89.
75. IBid, Chapters 99-101.
- 75A. Devībhāgavata, Skandha III, Chapter 27.
76. Altekar, Op Cit. pp. 9-10.
77. Vishnu Purāṇa, 1. 10-19.

78. Vāyu Purāṇa, 30. 28-29.
79. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 13, 30.
80. Altekar, Op Cit. pp. 10-11.
81. brihaspate bhaṣṇīṇī bhuvaṇā brahmavādinī/
yogasiddhā jagatkṛitsnamasaktā vicaratyut//
Vāyu Purāṇa, 66. 27.
82. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 2.28.
83. anuṣṇāpya guruṇcaiva vicaret pṛithvīmām/
sārabhūtamupāsita ṣṇānam yajṇēyasādhakam/
Vāyu Purāṇa, 17.2
84. Vāyu Purāṇa, 72. 13-15
85. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 10. 15-16
86. pitṛikārye niyuktatvādabhavad brahmavādinī
Matsya Purāṇa, 20, 27.
87. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 35, 13-14
88. Chandogya Upanishad, I, 11,4.
89. Yā sā, dehārdhasambhūtā gāyatrī brahmavādinī
Śātarūpā śatendriyā
Matsya Purāṇa, 4. 24.
90. Devyībhāṣagavata. Skandha IX, Chapter 16.
91. Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa, Chapter 98.
92. eteshām pīvarī kanyā mānasī divi viśrūtā/
yogini yogamātā ca tapastepe sudāruṇam/
Matsya Purāṇa, 15. 5-6.
93. Altekar, Op Cit. 20-21.
94. Viṣṇu Purāṇa II. 10. 20.
95. Matsya Purāṇa, 26. 26.
96. Ibid, 131. 9.

97. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 27. 708
98. śāstroḍito hi niyame vratam
Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 128. 1.
99. For details see Kane, History of Dharmasāstra,
Vol. V, pt. 1, pp. 1-60.
100. Matsya Purāṇa, 82. 29.
101. Padma Purāṇa, Brahmakhaṇḍa, 7, 16-81.
102. Ibid, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 32. 41-48.
103. Skanda Purāṇa, II, 4, 34, 6 ff.
104. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, I. 32

MARRIAGE

In connection with the problem of evolution of marriage Altekar observes that, being of "hoary antiquity" Hindu literature has naturally preserved some traces of promiscuity in prehistoric times. The noted scholar contents that there are a few passages in the text of Mahābhārata showing that a state promiscuity may not have been an impossibility at an early period. He also observes that these passages have a context and are not to be taken at their face value. In the said passage of Mahābhārata, Śarmishthā states that there is no difference between one's own husband and the husband of a friend.¹ Altekar notes that this is an argument advanced by a woman driven into desperation by the unnatural punishment of eternal maidenhood inflicted upon her. He has also quoted another noteworthy passage of the Mahābhārata mentioning that in the land Uttarakurus and in the city of Māhishmatī the institution of marriage did not exist.² Another passage of Mahābhārata mentions that, it was the sage Śvetaketu who decreed that promiscuity should be supplanted by regular marriage.³ Altekar finally concludes that the traces of promiscuity that we get in the epic have to be referred to pre-Vedic times, for we find the institution of marriage well established in the Rigveda.⁴

Without deviating very much from the above observations of Altekar, we are coming to the Purāṇic view of the circumstances in which promiscuity or indiscriminate mingling and free sexual relations figure in the society affecting adversely its well-established order. In this context, the Purāṇas give a dismal picture of the society due to the influence of the Kali Age. According to Vishnu-Purana, the age is characterized by the intrusion of the foreignness, and as a result of the intermingling of the people with these castless and immoral intruders immorality will spread and there will be no regard for the Śrauta and Smārta Dharma. Passion will be the sole bond between the sexes, women will be objects merely of sexual gratification, mutual assent will be marriage.⁵ In describing the evils of Kali age, the text of Skanda Purāṇa goes a step further. It is related that, in this age a brother might have sexual relationships with his own sister and the father with his daughter.⁶ The text Brahma Purāṇa states that, in the Kali age the women will leave their husband when the latter becomes poor.⁷ Thus, in the Purāṇic view promiscuity is a social evil. It comes over a result of dismemberment of age-old Varṇāśrama order. In fact the Purāṇa-passages do not refer to the existence of promiscuity in the society. Their reference is simply to its possibility

in the circumstances of unrestrained morality. The real import of the Purāṇa-passages has to be interpreted in the light of the observation of Kane on the above-mentioned passage of Mahābhārata. It has been shown that the passage rather gives expression to what the poet imagined about the remotest ages and not what he knew was the real state of society thousand of years before him.⁸ Even the theory of an original state of promiscuity once advanced by several sociologists has now ceased to be respectable.⁹

The tradition, which is preserved in the Purāṇa-texts reveals that marriage was regarded as a social and religious obligation. It has been pointed out that, this was the case even in the Indo-Iranian period.¹⁰ Thus, Avestā enjoins that oblations offered unto gods or ancestors by a maiden or a bachelor are unacceptable to them.¹¹ Among the Vedic texts, a passage of Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa is generally quoted. It regards an unmarried person as unholy.¹² A passage of Aitareya Brāhmaṇa relates that the wife is called "Jāyā" because the husband is born in the wife as son.¹³ The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa enjoins that 'The wife' is indeed half of oneself; therefore as long as a man does not secure a wife so long he does not beget a son and so he is till then not complete; but when he secures a wife he gets

progeny and then he becomes complete.¹⁴ The general credence as the Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra states, was that there can be no separation between husband and wife; for since marriage they have to perform religious acts jointly.¹⁵

Similar details are available in the Purāṇa-texts. Thus, the Vishṇu Purāṇa states that after finishing his studies and giving the parting donation to his preceptor, the man who wishes to lead the life of a householder must take a wife. If he does not propose to enter into the married state, he may remain as a student with his teacher, first making a vow to that effect, and employ himself in the service of his preceptor and of the preceptor's descendants; or he may become a hermit or adopt the order of the religious mendicant, according to his original determination. The text emphasizes that the householder who espouses a female connected with him by similarity of religious and civil obligations, and alongwith her discharges the duties of his condition, derives from such a wife great benefits.¹⁶ The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa enjoins that only that person is fit for abhisheka, who is accompanied by appropriate wife.¹⁷ According to Matsya Purāṇa only that Brāhmaṇa is fit for receiving alms, who is accompanied by wife.¹⁸ In

another context, the text of Matsya Purāṇa states that participation of wife (in religious observances) has been ~~decreased~~ ^{decried} by the seers as the obligation recommended by śruti.¹⁹ The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates the story of Mātāṅga, who was a friend of the mountain Himālaya. He practised severe penances in order to procure a daughter as beautiful as Gaurī, the daughter of Himālaya. During the course of his penances, Mātāṅga was accompanied by his wife; who is called sadharminī.²⁰ In the texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa, the act of lifting up the earth from the ocean by Varāha has been compared with the performance of Yajña. It is narrated that on this occasion he was accompanied by his wife Chāyā (chayapatnīśahāyo).²¹ Both these texts refer to a Yajña performed in the Naimishāraṇya by Tapa, who was accompanied by his wife Ilā.²² The text of Vāyu Purāṇa relates that Kāśyapa was accompanied by his wife Diti, on the occasion of performance of Aśvamedha by the former in the Pushker Tīrtha.²³ Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa mentions that king Sagara accomplished his sacrificial bath along with his wife.²⁴ Matsya Purāṇa enjoins that entrance into sacrificial hall along with wife leads to auspicious results.²⁵ Besides sacrifice, presence of wife was desirable also on other ceremonial occasions. Thus, the text of Brahmāṇḍa

Purāṇa relates that Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Mahēśa and other various gods worship Śrīdevatā along with their wives.²⁶ Matsya Purāṇa relates that, when the demon Vajraṅga was observing severe penances without taking any meal, his wife was sitting on the embankment of the pond in a speechless posture.²⁷ Vāyu Purāṇa enjoins that, while offering oblation to fire on the occasion of Śrāddha, a person should be accompanied by his wife.²⁸

The purpose of marriage was to enable a man, by becoming householder, to perform sacrifices to the gods and to procreate sons. Statement to the above effect is available at a number of places in the Ṛigveda including III, 53.4; V, 3.2; V, 28.3 and X, 85.36. It has been observed that, when Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, II, 5.11.12, forbids taking a second wife if the first is endowed with progeny and the performance religious rites, it indicates that the main purposes of marriage are two: viz. the wife enables a man to perform religious rites and is mother of a son or sons who were supposed to save a man from hell.²⁹ Manusmṛiti states that on the wife depend the procreation of sons, the performances of religious rites, service, highest pleasure, heaven for onself and for one's ancestors.³⁰ Works of

Kālidāsa reveal that marriage was a necessary rite to be performed by every dvija. The stage of householder was regarded as the most important of the four āśramas, since it fed the rest of them, and therefore a brahmacārī, who had acquired a knowledge of the fourteen sciences, settled down as a married householder.³¹

In the Purāṇa-tradition also the underlying motive of marriage is said to be procreation of progeny. According to Viṣṇu Purāṇa, a person behaving otherwise was supposed to be shorn of lustre.³² The text refers to the maiden called Mārishā. She was nourished by king Soma. She was married to Prācetasas for the multiplication of the race.³³ The same text relates the story of Dakṣa and the purpose of his marriage with Asikṇī, the daughter of the patriarch Vīraṇa. It is narrated that, finding that his mind-progeny did not multiply themselves, Dakṣa determined, in order to secure their increase, to establish sexual intercourse as the means of multiplication. For this purpose he espoused Asikṇī a damsel addicted to devout practices, the eminent supportress of the world.³⁴ The Purāṇa-texts even prescribe rituals for the procreation of progeny after marriage. According to Matsya Purāṇa, if a woman does not conceive, or her Children die, or she

gets abortion; she should worship seven women, having their husband living. These women should then give the woman a bath.³⁵ According to Agni Purāṇa, the woman in question should be given bath in a lake full of lotuses, or she should be given bath near the Asoka tree.³⁶ Thus, the general tendency of the Purāṇa-texts is to lay stress on the necessity of married life with a view to procreating and multiplying the progeny of the race and family. It is for this obvious reason, that the Purāṇa-texts like the Dharmaśāstra works attempt to glorify the status of a house-holder, i.e., Gṛhasthāśrama. The passages of Vishṇu Purāṇa,³⁷ Vāyu Purāṇa³⁸ and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa³⁹ tend to show that the order of the house-holder was regarded as the most distinguished. It was considered to be the never-centre of other āśramas and even superior to all of them.

It has been observed that rules for the selection of the bride are far more elaborate than those for selecting a bridegroom, though in some respects they are the same.⁴⁰ The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives expression to the then view that broad hips and slender waists make woman more attractive.⁴¹ Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra states that one should marry a girl who is endowed with intelligence, beauty,

a good character and auspicious characteristics and who is healthy.⁴² Śākhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra requires that the girl should be possessed of auspicious lakṣaṇas. These lakṣaṇas are of two kinds, bāhya (visible or bodily characteristics) and abhyantara (invisible).⁴³ Manusmṛiti points out that one should not marry a girl having tawny hair or having an excessive limb (such as sixth finger) or a deficient limb, who is hairless or very hairy, who is talkative and has yellowish eyes; but should marry a girl who has limbs void of any defect, whose gait is like that of a swan or an elephant, the hair on whose head or body is of slight growth and whose teeth are small, whose body is delicate.⁴⁴ Manusmṛiti also observes that the girl to be married must not bear names of lunar mansions (such as Revatī, Ārdrā etc), trees or rivers, she must not bear a mlecchha name or that of a mountain, of a bird, of a snake or of a slave or a name that is terrific.⁴⁵

Coming to the account of the Purāṇas, we find a detailed description of the lakṣaṇas of a bride to be selected for marriage in the text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa. It states that a person should select a maiden who has not too much hair, but is not without any; one who is not very black nor yellow

complexioned, and who is not from birth a cripple or deformed. He must not marry a girl who is vicious or unhealthy, of low origin, or labouring under disease; one who is ill brought up; one who talks improperly; one who inherits some malady from father or mother, one who has a beard or who is of masculine appearance; one who speaks thick and thin, or croaks like a raven; one who keeps her eyes shut, or has the eyes very prominent; one who has hairy legs or thick ankles; or one who has dimples in her cheeks when she laughs. It is added that a wise and prudent man should not marry a girl of such a description. He should not wed a girl of harsh skin; or one ^{wife} ~~one~~ white nails; or one with red eyes, or with very fat hands and feet; or one who is a dwarf, or one who is very tall; or one whose eyebrows meet, or whose teeth are far apart, and resemble tusks.⁴⁶ According to Padma Purāṇa the bride should not be very short nor very tall, should not have profuse hair on the body, nor should be devoid of good hair on the head; her eye-brows should not be touching each other at the inner ends; she should not have a name indicating a river, serpent, mountain a tree or that of birds.⁴⁷ Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that a girl having a name of a goddess, or a river, should be avoided. It narrates that a Brāhmaṇa named Nārāyaṇa

met with sudden death, after he married two daughters of a sage, who were named Bhavānī and Gautamī.⁴⁸ The same text further relates that a person marrying a girl having very short hair, or being very tall or very short, dies within six months.⁴⁹

As regards the age of marriage for girls, it has been observed that in the Ṛigveda there are no clear statements about the exact age when girls were married.⁵⁰ In Rigveda, X. 27.12 it is said 'when a bride is fine looking and well adorned, she by herself seeks her friend from among men.' That shows that girls were grown - up enough to select their husbands. Some of the verses in marriage hymn (such as Ṛigveda X. 85, 26-27, 46) indicate that married girls could not have been child-wives, but must have been grown up. In Ṛigveda I. 51, 13 Indra is said to have given to old Kakshīvat a wife named Vṛicayā who is styled 'arbha' (young). But the word is only used in contradistinction to the word 'mahate' (grown old) applied to Kakshīvat and conveys no idea of her exact age. With reference to the above passage and many others of the kind, Kane concludes that in the period of Ṛigveda girls were probably married at any age (either before or after puberty) and sometimes remained spinsters

all their life.⁵¹ During the period of grihya and dharma sūtras, from several considerations, girls were married just before the time of puberty or immediately after it. Thus, Gautama Dharma Sūtra enjoins that a girl should be given in marriage before she attains the age of puberty. He who neglects it commits sin.⁵² Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra recommends that a girl must be married early and may be given even to one who is devoid of qualities.⁵³ It has been shown that from about 600 B.C. to about the beginning of the Christian Era it did not matter at all if a girl was married a few months or a few years after puberty. But by about 200 A.D. popular feeling had become insistent on pre-puberty marriages. It is added that this change was possibly due to the following circumstances. Buddhism had spread far and wide during these centuries with its encouragement of the institution of monks and nuns. There was laxity of morals among nuns. Girls had generally ceased to study anything, though some of them did study in the times of Pāṇini and Patañjali, and so society did not like girls to remain doing nothing. From the times of the Ṛigveda (X. 85. 40-41) there was a mystical belief that Soma, Gandharva and Agni were the divine guardian of a girl and the Grihyasaṁgraha (quoted in the commentary on Gobhila grihya sūtra III. 4.6) says that Soma enjoys

a girl first, then Gandharva enjoys her when her breasts develop and fire when she menstruates. Therefore, a feeling arose that a girl must be married even before she develops any distinct signs of femininity. Further, since marriage came to be looked upon as the Upanayana in the case of women, naturally the age of upanayana (8th year) came to be looked upon as the proper age of marriage.⁵⁴

Coming to the evidence of the Purāṇa-texts, it is noticeable that the text of Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that twelve is the proper age for marriage in case of a girl. In the Purāṇa tradition, the best period of a woman's life is believed to be when she is between eight and twelve years of age. The text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa narrates that gopa Nanda saw Rādhā a girl of twelve, having steady youth;⁵⁵ when the old maiden Kubjā, with a hunch-back, was made young by Kṛishṇa by his touch, she appeared like an attractive girl of twelve;⁵⁷ king Kārtavīrya saw in his dream that a girl of twelve, decked with all ornaments, went away from his house being angry; this indicated the loss of all glory and wealth for him.⁵⁸ In the chapter on position of girls, we have taken into account the Purāṇa-passages applying various epithets, according to the age, in the case

of girls. It has been shown ¹⁻ a girl of eight (or seven) was called gaurī, of nine Rohiṇī, of ten Kanyā; after that she is called Rajasvalā (menstruating). The text of Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that a girl should be married before she becomes a Rajasvalā.⁵⁹ As a matter of fact the Purāṇic injunction, in respect of marriage of a girl, is well in consonance with the Dharmaśāstric one. Thus, the text of Padma Purāṇa enjoins that the age of marriage in case of the bride, the best is when she is eight years old; because when she shows the ^{pubic} ~~pubic~~ hair, the god Soma enjoys her; at the advent of the menstruation - fluid the Gadharvas enjoy her; when the breasts begin to show Agni enjoys her; hence a girl should be married prior to her reaching the period of menstruation, and when she is eight years of age.⁶⁰ The text of Skanda Purāṇa gives the same account. It also adds that a girl who begins the 'period' is called nagnikā; hence a girl should be married when she is anagnikā to gain the real benefit of kanyādāma.⁶¹ The text of Brahma Purāṇa records another practice. It states that a girl should be married after the age of four and before she reaches her tenth year; she should be got married as long as she does not know the bashfulness and plays in dust.⁶² According to Viṣṇu Purāṇa after completing his

studenthood period, one should marry a maiden who is of a third of his age.⁶³ The commentator of Vishnu Purāṇa observes that by this is to be understood, a young girl, but at the same time one not immature; for otherwise a man of thirty, by which age he completes his sacred studies would espouse a girl of but ten years.

As regards forms of marriage, the gr̥hyasūtras, dharmasūtras and smṛitis lay down that the forms of marriage are eight, viz. Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha, Prājapatya, Āsura, Gāndharva Rākshasa and Paisāca.⁶⁴ The gift of a daughter, after decking her (with valuable garments) and honouring her by presents of jewels, to a man learned in the Veda and of good conduct, whom (the father) himself invites is called the Prāhma rite. The gift of a daughter who has been decked with ornaments to a priest who duly officiates at a sacrifice, during the course of its performance, they call it the Daiva rite. When (the father) gives away his daughter, according to the rule, after receiving from the bridegroom, for (the fulfilment of) the sacred law, a cow and a bull or two pairs, that is named as the Ārsha rite. When (the bridegroom) receives a maiden, after having given as much wealth as he can afford to

the kinsmen and to the bride herself, according to his own will, that was called the Āsura rite. The voluntary union of a maiden and her lover was called Gāndharva rite. It springs from desire and has sexual intercourse for its purpose. The forcible abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries out and weep, after her kinsmen have been slain or wounded and their houses broken open, was called Rākshasā rite. When a man by stealth seduces a girl who is sleeping, intoxicated, or disordered in intellect was the eighth one. It was considered to be the most base and sinful rite of the Pisācas.⁶⁵

Coming to the Puranic records we find that, in close consonance with the dharmasāstric injunction noted above the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa states that the forms of marriage are eight, namely, the Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha, Prājāpatya, Āsura, Gāndharva and Paisāca. About the last one, it is remarked that of all the forms this one is the worst. The text also adds that the householder who espouses a female connected with him by similarity of religious and civil obligations, and along with her discharges the duties of his condition, derives from such a wife great benefits.⁶⁶

Other Purāṇas like Agni (154.9-11), Padma (233.21-30) and Garuḍa (I. 95.7) also describe that forms of marriage are eight. They also give the details of these forms as under : (1) Brāhma, in which the girl is ritually given to a suitable person who has good family background and possess good moral character, (2) Daiva, where the girl is given to a priest officiating at a sacrifice, (3) Ārsha, in which the girl is given to a suitable person, having good family background and possessing good moral character, alongwith a pair of cow and bull, (4) Prājapatya, in which the girl is given to one who asks for her, (5) Gāndharva, where the bride and the bridegroom settle the marriage with mutual consent, (6) Āsura, where the girl is given for money; it is the lower type, (7) Rākshasa, wherein the bride is forcibly taken away in a flight, (8) Paisāca, when the girl is taken away with torture or deception. In this connection, the text of Garuḍa Purāṇa states that the first four are praiseworthy and are meant for the Brāhmaṇa; the next two are acceptable for the Kshatriya, likewise the Āsura is for the Vaiśya, while the last one is meant for the Śūdra.⁶⁷

In the text of Skanda Purāṇa, the number of forms of marriage is increased to ten. These are

enumerated as under : Prājapatya, Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha, Gāndharva, Āsura, Rākshasa, Paisāca, Prātibha and Ghātana.⁶⁸ It also states that nothing should be taken for the girl in return and adds that even the Ārsha form wherein a pair of cow and bull is accepted for the girl is equal to selling of girl.⁶⁹ In this connection S.A. Dange⁷⁰ draws our attention to the difference of opinion as to whether the pair is to be given to or taken is old, the Manusmṛiti, III, 29. says that it should be taken from him. The noted scholar also refers to Manusmṛiti III. 53 without giving the content of the concerned verse. The verse relates, "Some call the cow and the bull (given) at an Ārsha wedding 'a gratuity'; (but) that is wrong since (the acceptance of) a fee, be it small or great, is a sale (of the daughter)." Dange, however, has not taken any notice of the subsequent verse, which qualifies the earlier verse, and as such it justifies the śulka or fee taken by the guardians of the daughter at the time of the wedding. The verse relates, "When the relatives do not appropriate (for their use) the gratuity (given), it is not a sale; (in that case) the gift is only a token of respect and kindness towards the maidens.

While the text of Skanda Purāṇa increases the number from eight to ten, the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa reduces it to four. It mentions four unique types and calls them Udvāha. It mentions four types of wives, namely, (1) Kāla-krītā, purchased for a particular time or due to particular time, (2) Kraya-krītā, purchased outright, (3) Pitṛidattā, given by parents, and (4) Svayamyutā, United of her own accord. It is also enjoined that the first is the prostitute, the second is slave, the svayamyutā is the one married according to the gāndharva marriage, and she is also called yuktā; and the pitṛidattā is termed bhāryā, 'wife'.⁷¹

We may illustrate some instances of the above-mentioned forms of marriage available in the Purāṇa-texts. Thus, the texts of Viṣṇu Purāṇa,⁷² Vāyu Purāṇa,⁷³ Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa⁷⁴ and Matsya Purāṇa⁷⁵ relate the love-affair of Purūravā and Urvāśī, which ultimately culminated in marriage. The texts of Vāyu Purāṇa⁷⁶ and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa⁷⁷ relate the story of Śatarūpā, the maiden who selected Manu as her husband according to her own choice. Viṣṇu Purāṇa narrates that Pradyumna procured the daughter of Rukmī in svyamvara.⁷⁸ In the same text we come across the story how Kāśīraja arranged svyamvara for

the marriage of his daughter on latter's insistence.⁷⁹

The Kālikā Purāṇa relates the story of Vasishṭha's marriage with Arundhatī. It is said that Sandhyā was the mind-born daughter of Brahmā. She deemed herself polluted by the influence of Kāma as well as by the amorous glances of Brahmā and his mind-born sons. Consequently she determined to expiate her sin. On the advice of Vasishṭha she practised penance on the Candrabhaga mountain at the side of a beautiful lake named Bṛihallohita. She began to worship Viṣṇu with the mantra 'Om namo Vāsudevaya Om'. She threw her body, which was converted into a cake into the sacrifice instituted by Medhātithi and was reborn as the daughter of the latter. After she had received instructions from Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī, Sarasvatī, Drupadā and Bahulā on chastity, she fell in love with Vasishṭha and was duly married to him.⁸⁰ The marriage narrated in this story may, probably, ^{be} put into the category of gāndharva form in which, as Altekar observes the parties fall in love with each other and immediately proceed to consummate their contemplated marriage. Referring to Deval quoted by Kullūka on Manusmṛiti, VIII, 226, he further observese that the ritual in this form has to be performed after the union.⁸¹ Next to this narrative of Kālikā Purāṇa,

we are illustrating a passage of Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa. It is distinguished from the famous Vashṇava Mahāpurāṇa called Bhā^{ga}vata. The present one is an interesting upapurāṇa dealing with the praise of Devī and her worship. Satī-Śiva episode is available in this text in an amended form. It narrates that, as a result of Dakṣa's penance Devī was born as Satī having eight hands and fair complexion. She chose Śiva as her husband by placing the garland meant for selection of husband on the ground after pronouncing the words 'Śivāya Namaḥ'. Subsequently she was married to Śiva.⁸² The account is an instance of svyamvara. On the authority of the commentary of Vīramitrodaya on Yājñavalkya-smṛiti, Kane observes that svyamvara was practically the gāndharva form.^{82A} The text of Devībhāgavata Purāṇa narrates the story of Sudarśana, eldest son of Dhruvasandhi, king of Kośāla. He was deprived of the throne after his father's death by Yudhajit, the maternal grandfather of his step-brother Śatrujit, took shelter in Bhāradvāja's hermitage, won Devī's favour by muttering the syllable "klim", became fortunate enough to see Vaiṣṇavī Śakti even in his childhood, and was able to recover his kingdom by marrying Śaśikalā, daughter of Subāhu, king of Kāśī in a svayamvara.⁸³ In another context, the text of Devībhāgavata relates

the story of Gaṅgā's origin from the bodies of Kṛishṇa and Rādhā liquefied by Śiva's song on Kṛishṇa during the Rāsotsava on the Kārttikī Paurṇamāsī. It further narrates Rādhā's rage against Gaṅgā, and her intention to drink the latter up; Gaṅgā's entrance into Kṛishṇa's feet; Brahmā's imparting of the Rādhikā-mantra to Gaṅgā; Gaṅgā's worship of Rādhā according to the directions of the Sāmaveda, and her passing to Vaikuṇṭha; Brahmā's taking into his Kamaṇḍalu the water from which Gaṅgā came out. Then, it narrates Brahmā's request to Viṣṇu to accept Gaṅgā as his wife, and Viṣṇu's consequent marriage with Gaṅgā according to the Gāndharva form.⁸⁴ In the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, there is an account of two cases of marriage; in which sex-relationship is given precedence over actual performance of marriage. These two may be put into the category of a variety of gāndharva form. It is stated that a girl may be allowed to have sexual intercourse with a person, with the permission of her parents though without marriage rituals; but in that case, the man who commits the act would be purified after a fast for three days, and that too if he marries her alone. As regards the second case it is narrated that, if a girl is married to a person, after having sexual relationship with another known to her parents, she does not become a widow if her husband dies;

she goes and stays with the person who first had intercourse with her.⁸⁵ The text of Kalikā Purāṇa refers to the marriage of Rīcika with Satyavatī. It is related that Satyavatī was daughter of the ~~some~~-less king Gāndhī of Kānyakubja. Bhṛigu's son Rīcika married Satyavatī, by presenting to him, as nuptial fee, one thousand moon-white horses of a particular description, which he had procured by pleasing Varuṇa for the purpose.⁸⁶ This marriage may be put into the category of Ārsha form. According to the Dharmasāstric tradition, when there is a gift of one's daughter, after taking one pair of cattle (a cow and a bull) or two pairs only as a matter of fulfilling the law (and not as a sale of the girl), that is named the Ārsha form.⁸⁷ Now, we proceed to illustrate a passage of Bhaviṣhyottara Purāṇa. Generally speaking the authoritative character of this text is held in doubt, because it is not included in any of the lists of eighteen Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas known to us. But, as Hazra shows, this exclusion has not stood in the way of its recognition as an authoritative work. The Smṛiti-writers also regard it as a Purāṇic work. For instance, Hemadri, Mādhavācārya, Anantabhaṭṭa and Mitra Mishra regard it as a 'Purāṇa'. According to Narasiṃha Vājapeyin it is an Upapurāṇa and a part of the

Bhavishya Purāṇa, Hazra also observed that it was compiled towards the end of the 8th century A.D.⁸⁸ Kane shows that, the Bhavishyottara cannot be dated later than 1000 A.D.⁸⁹ Thus, we shall not be on erring side in utilizing the evidence of ~~of~~ Bhavishyottara Purāṇa in the spirit of our note. The text praises a person, who gives one's daughter or a helpless girl to a worthy bridegroom either of the same caste as that of the girl or of a higher one, without accepting any money from the bridegroom.⁹⁰ The statement of ~~of~~ Bhavishyottara Purāṇa in this context is well in tune with the Dharmasāstric injunction. Altekar observes that the writers of Dharmasāstra literature almost lose their temper in condemning the custom of bride-price.⁹¹ Baudhāyana warns the guardians that they will go to the most terrible hell if they sell their daughters in marriage, and points out to the husband that a purchased bride would not become a legal wife at all.⁹² The text of Padma Purāṇa advises that even the face of a person, who has sold his daughter in marriage, should not be seen.⁹³

We now come to the Purāṇic references to remarriage of women and the analysis ^{of} such references in the light of external evidences. It has been observed that widow remarriage prevailed in the

Vedic society. Passages of Ṛigveda (X. 18.8) and Atharvaved IX, 5.27-28) have been cited in support. In the subsequent periods, there are also evidences with reference to the possibility of remarriage. Thus the Vasishṭha-dharmasūtra enjoins that even a Brāhmaṇa lady with living children need wait for five years, if her husband, gone out on a journey, does not return. If she is unwilling to go to him, she should not wed outside the family, if there is an eligible person within it (XVII, 67). The custom, however, came into disrepute later on. Thus, the evidence of Mahābhārata shows that, when urged to make peace on the last day of the war, Duryodhana says that he is declined to enjoy the earth as a man is to marry a widow (IX. 31, 45). In the later stages ascetic ideals grew up. Resistance to remarriage of women became stronger. Manu lays down that a woman should never even think of remarriage (V, 157). Nārada enjoins that, girls are married only once (XII, 28). In another context, however, Nārada allows a woman to remarry in case her husband is untraceable, or has expired, or has entered a monastery, or has become misfit for procreating progeny (XII. 97). Parāśara holds similar view (IV, 23). It has been observed that, although remarriage of women in Brāhmaṇa community was getting unpopular; yet it was still common among other classes.⁹⁴

Coming to the Purāṇic view of remarriage of women, we start with the term 'punarbhū' used in the text of Skanda Purāṇa.⁹⁵ The context shows that its sense is quite different from 'punarbhava' used in the sense of rebirth in Sanskrit texts (e.g. Abhijñāṣakuntalam VI. 36). The text of Skanda Purāṇa shows that the term 'punarbhū' indicated a woman who had an earlier husband, or one whose chastity has been spoilt. It is stated that ghosts stay in a house where there is such a woman. In the Smṛiti tradition three categories of "punarbhūs" are mentioned. These are as under; (a) a maiden whose hand was taken in marriage but whose marriage was not consummated; in her case the marriage ceremony has to be performed once more; (b) a woman who deserts the husband of her youth, be^c takes herself to another man and then returns to the house of her husband; (c) a woman who is given by the husband's relatives (when the husband dies) to a sapinḍa of the deceased husband or a person of the same caste, on failure of brothers-in-law. The last one, lower, is a case of niyoga.^{95A} In this connection S.A. Dange draws our attention to a passage of Agni Purāṇa which states that a girl is "given" only once; and whosoever usurps her deserves punishment like a thief.⁹⁶ To this observation of Dange, it may be added that the above norm was well known to the Purāṇa tradition.

Reference to this effect is available in the text of Matsya Purāṇa, which is known to have been composed earlier than Agni Purāṇa. It relates that the Madra-king was foretold about the death of the would-be husband of his daughter Sāvitrī. Hence he was much grieved because of the norm that daughter is "given" only once.⁹⁷ The Purāṇic injunction is no doubt in harmony with the Smṛiti tradition. As we have shown above, Nārada Smṛiti makes a similar statement. The text of Bṛhannāradiya Purāṇa encourages the performance of Yugadharma by all the castes (Yugadharmāḥ parigrāhyā varṇair etair yathocitam, 22, 11), but lays down a number of practices which are stated to be forbidden by wise men in the Kali age (iman dharmān kaliyuge varjyan āhur manīṣiṇaḥ, 22.16). Among such forbidden practices in the Kali age, the text alludes to offering again (in marriage) to another (bridegroom), of a girl, whose marriage was not consummated.⁹⁸ A verse of Ādi Purāṇa quoted in Smṛiti Candrikā, I, p. 221, Hāratalā, p. 15, and Dāna-kaumudī, p. 80; disallows the remarriage of a girl, no matter whether she was a widow or not. A person, who had such a wife, was always considered as impure. Dange draws our attention to a passage of Agni Purāṇa (154.56) which allows remarriage of a woman if the husband is lost (for

many years) is dead, has become a mendicant, is a eunuch or has fallen low.⁹⁹ The noted scholar has not taken into account a passage of Vishṇu Dharmottara, which is one of the major Vaishṇava Upapurāṇas. The text almost reproduces the verse of Nārada Smṛiti and Parāśara Smṛiti analysed above.¹⁰⁰ The evidence supplied by Vishṇu Dharmottara is more authentic than that of Agni Purāṇa. Hazra's analysis shows that the text of Vishṇudharmottara can not be dated later than 500 A.D.;¹⁰¹ while the text of Agni not earlier than 800 A.D.¹⁰² The practice of remarriage of women under the afore-mentioned circumstances may be dated accordingly.

Generally speaking the Dharmasāstra tradition favored savaṇṇa-marriage. Thus the Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra¹⁰³ requires that one should marry a girl of the same varṇa, who was not given before to another and marriage with whom is in accordance with Sāstra and says that by contradiction these rules ^{sin}~~are~~ is incurred. Gautama Dharma Sūtra enjoins that one should marry a girl of the same Varṇa.¹⁰⁴ Manu Smṛiti¹⁰⁵ and Nārada Smṛiti^{105A} state that best course is to marry a girl of one's own caste. This is said to be pūrva kalpa (the foremost or the best procedure).

In Purāṇa tradition, too, we come across the same practice. In this connection we may refer to Devayāni-Yayāti episode narrated in the text of Matsya Purāṇa. It is related that Yayati who was born in a royal family was hesitant to marry Devayāni, who was daughter of a brāhmaṇa.¹⁰⁶ The text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa relates that king Sagara married Keśinī, who was a Vidarbha princess.¹⁰⁷ According to Vāyu Purāṇa the five wives of king Uśīnara hailed from royal families.¹⁰⁸ All these instances have reference to savarṇa-marriage. It may be mentioned that the text of Bṛhannāradiya Purāṇa categorically names a number of lawful practices which being considered unfavourable for the attainment of heaven and disliked by the people, have been forbidden by wise men in the kali age. Among the prohibited practices a-savarṇa-marriage finds conspicuous mention.¹⁰⁹

The Purāṇa-texts like the Smṛitis are not in favour of inter-caste marriage. Thus the Āpastamba Smṛiti quoted by Udvāhatattva of Raghunandan (ed. by Jīvananda Vol. II, p. 112) says that by marrying a girl of another caste a man incurs the sin of mahāpātaka and has to go the penance of 24 kricchras. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa¹¹⁰ narrates the story of king Nābhāga who married a Vaiśya girl by the rākshasa

form of marriage and who consequently incurred sin. Subsequently he was deprived of his share of patrimonial sovereignty, which his son and successor recovered. The text of Vishṇudharma Purāṇa enjoins that gift made to a brāhmaṇa having a Śūdra-wife becomes unproductive.¹¹¹ The Bhaviṣhyottara Purāṇa condemns those twice-born men who enjoy Śūdra women and classify them as mahāpātakin.¹¹²

Purāṇas like the Smṛitis are rigid about sapinḍa relationship in marriage. Thus, Manusmṛiti enjoins that a damsel who is neither a sapinḍa on the mother's side, nor belongs to the same family on the father's side, is recommended to twice-born men for wedlock and conjugal union¹¹³ (III. 5). Almost in a similar tune the text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa ordains that one should marry a maiden who is kin at least five degrees remote from his mother, and seven from his father; with the ceremonies enjoined by law.¹¹⁴ While laying down the general rule about the propinquity (sāpinḍya) the text of Agni Purāṇa also states that from the mother's side upto five degrees and from the father's side seven degrees marriage should be avoided.¹¹⁵

Much has been said about gotra and pravara and their consideration in marriage-relationship. In a nutshell these two terms may be defined as follows. Gotra is the latest ancestor or one of the latest ancestors of a person by whose name his family has been known for generations, while pravara is constituted by the ~~s~~ages or in some cases the remotest ancestor alone.¹¹⁶ The smṛiti-tradition lays down that marriage between parties that are sagotra or sapravara is no marriage and the woman does not become the man's wife. Thus, the Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra lays down that, if a man has intercourse with a sagotra girl, he should undergo the penance of cāndrāyaṇa.¹¹⁷

As far the Purāṇa texts, we start with Viṣṇu Purāṇa. It alludes to sage ~~sage~~ Viśvāmtra, whose descendants bear the designation of Kauśika gotra. The text lays down that marriage within this gotra is not possible.¹¹⁸ Matsya Purāṇa refers to Brahmā-Śatarūpa episode and expresses surprise over the marriage within the same gotra.¹¹⁹ Matsya Purāṇa as also the text of Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa give an exhaustive list of gotras and pravaras and lay down that marriage in the same gotra and pravara should be avoided.¹²⁰ Besides the above-mentioned popular restrictions, there are a few others of

special note. Thus according to the text of Skanda Purāṇa, persons who are cāturvidya (versed in the four Vedas) and those who are trividya (versed in the three Vedas) should not intermarry.¹²¹ The marriage of the elder sister or daughter was desired to be accomplished first, then the younger one should get married. Thus, in the text of Padma Purāṇa Lakshmi says to Viṣṇu that she can not be got married to him prior to the marriage of Alakṣmi, who is elder than her (jyeshthā).¹²²

We now come to the Purāṇic references to monogamy, polygamy and polyandry. Going back to the dharmasāstric tradition, we find that monogamy was the established ideal. Thus, the Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra declares that, when a man has a wife who is endowed with dharma and progeny, he shall not marry another; but if any one of the two is wanting he may marry another before he has consecrated the sacred śrauta fires.¹²³ In another context, it is prescribed that one who abandons his (faultless) wife should put on the skin of an ass with the hair outside and should beg for alms at seven houses for six months.¹²⁴ It is, however, doubtful, if this practice was followed strictly. Thus, Deval quoted in the Gṛihastharatnākera says that the Śūdra may have only one wife, a Vaiśya two, a Kshatriya

three, a brāhmaṇa four but a king may have as many as he desires.¹²⁵ Classical Sanskrit texts reveal that although people in general wedded a single wife, plurality of wife was not unknown. Nobles and rich men were often wedded to several wives. Thus in the *Māṇṣikā*, it is stated "Even to the extent of admitting a rival, noble ladies who have their husbands honour their spouses; the great rivers bear to the ocean the waters of many a tributary stream."¹²⁶ As regards polyandry, it has been observed on the basis of the Vedic texts like *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (12.12) and *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (VI. 6.4.3; VI. 5.1.4) that in those ancient times polyandry was unheard¹²⁷ (Kane, 554). It has also been observed that the most glaring example of polyandry in Sanskrit literature is that of Draupadi¹²⁸ ~~(Kane)~~. In Purāṇa tradition, too, monogamy was ideal. Thus the text of *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* states that, only that person is happy who has one wife. On the other hand, a person having many wives can never be happy.¹²⁹ However, the Purāṇa-texts reveal a number of cases of polygamy. Thus the text of *Vishṇu*, *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Matsya* state that *prajāpati* Dakṣa for the purpose of increasing progeny gave ten daughters to Dharma, thirteen to Kaśyapa, twenty seven to Soma, four to Arishtanemi, two to Aṅgirā and two to Kṛiśāsva.¹³⁰

The texts of Viṣṇu, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa describe that prajāpati Dakṣha had twenty four daughters through his wife Prasūti, who were married to Dharma, Sages and the manes.¹³¹ The texts of Vāyu and Matsya relate that king Uśīnara had five wives, while king Pāṇḍu had two.¹³² The texts Viṣṇu and Matsya allude to sixteen thousand wives of Kṛishṇa.¹³³ Instances of polyandry are also available in passages of the Purāṇa-texts. Thus, Viṣṇu Purāṇa relates that Mārishā had ten husbands.¹³⁴ The text of Skanda Purāṇa reveals that polyandry was prevalent among certain castes. It mentions an ābhīra woman having five husbands (pañcabhartrikā).¹³⁵ Vapu, a beautiful woman says to Indra that she is having many husbands, like an ābhīra woman.¹³⁶ In another context the text of Skanda Purāṇa relates that Sāvitrī cursed the gopakanyā Gāyatrī that she is a "censured cowherdess" (vigarhitā ābhīrī), "of no character like a prostitute" (Veśyā ~~mas~~ṭacaritā) and "having many husbands" (bahubhartrikā).¹³⁷ The most glaring example of polyandry is that of Draupadī, available in the passages of Viṣṇu and Matsya.¹³⁸ It is significant that the Draupadī episode is most explicitly housed in the Mahabharata account.¹³⁹ The text relates that Yudhisṭhira tried to justify the action on the ground of ancient practice and the

agreement of the brothers to share everything that any one of them may secure. However, Yudhisṭhira could ~~fetch~~^{set} out only two instances in support of the practice. viz. of Jaṭilā Gaṇṭamī, who had seven sages as husbands and of Vārکشī (i.e. Mārishā of the Purāṇa account noted above) who had ten Prācetasa brothers as husbands. In view of the above, many scholars are led to think that the Pāṇḍavas belonged to non-Aryan stock. Somehow, they were grafted on the Aryan stock and were regarded as relatives of the Kauravas by the editor of Mahābhārata. Kane rightly observes that, this sounds somewhat far-fetched. This practice did not get any dharmasāstric recognition. Thus, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, as Kane notes, says that there were five Draupadīs and not one. They were married separately to the five Pāṇḍavas.¹⁴⁰

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 29-30; Mahābhārata, I, 76. 28.
2. Mahābhārata, Yatra nāryaḥ kāmācārā bhavanti, XII. 102, 26, svairiṇyastra naryo hi yatheshṭham Vicarāntyuta, II, 32. 40.
3. anāvṛtāḥ kila purā striya āsanvarānane, svetaketuriti khyātāḥ putrastasyābhavanmuniḥ/ maryādeya kṛitā tena dharmyā vai/svetaketunā// ibid, I. 4, 12.
4. Altekar, Op Cit. p. 31.
5. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, IV, 24.
6. bhrātā bhaginīgantā pitā putrīṇca vai kalau; Skanda Purāṇa, II, 7, 22. 45.
7. Brahma Purāṇa, 229, 17-21.
8. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 428.
9. M. Cole, 'Marriage, past and present', p. 10.
10. Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 31.
11. Ashi Yasta, C, X. 54.
12. ayajñiyo vā esha Yo'patnīkaḥ, Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa II, 2, 2.6.
13. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 33.1.

14. . ardha ha vā esha ātmano Yajjāyāyā tasmādyāva-
jjāyām na vindate naiva tāvatprajāyate asarvo
hi tāvadbhavati atha yadaiva jāyām Vindate'tha
prajāyate tarhi hi sarvo bhavati, Śatapatha
Brāhmaṇa, V. 2, 1.10.
15. jayapatyorna vibhāgo vidyate, pāṇigrahaṇaddhi
sahatvam karmasu, Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, 11,
6. 13. 161-17.
16. grahītavidyo --- kuryaddāraparigraham -----
sahadharmacāriṇīm prāpya gārhashtyam sahitastayā
samudvaheddadātyetatsamyaggūḍham mātāphālam,
Vishṇu Purāṇa, II. 10. 13 ff.
17. anukūlāṅganāsamyukta-mabhihincediti śrutam,
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV. 14. 15.
18. Matsya Purāṇa, 54, 24.
19. Ibid, 142. 41.
20. Brahṁāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 4. 32. 89-104.
21. Vāyu Purāṇa, 6, 22-23, Brahṁāṇḍa Purāṇa 1.5.19.
22. Vāyu Purāṇa, 2, 6; Brahṁāṇḍa Purāṇa, 1.1.6
23. Vāyu Purāṇa, 67, 57.
24. Brahṁāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 55.12
25. Matsya Purāṇa, 58. 21.
26. Brahṁāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV, 40. 93-97.
27. Matsya Purāṇa, 146, 61-62.
28. Vāyu Purāṇa, 75. 70.

29. Kane, Op Cit. pp. 428-429.
30. Manusmṛiti, IX. 28.
31. Raḡhuvaṁśa, III, 30; V. 20-21.
32. sāntānikādayo vā te Yācyamāna nirākṛitāḥ ----
yenāsi vigataprabhaḥ, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, V. 38, 38.
33. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, I, 15.8
34. Ibid, I, 15.90 ff.
35. Matsya Purāṇa, 67, 25-29.
36. padminyām snāpayennārīm garbho yasyāḥ
sravettathā/ aśokasannidhau snāyāj्jāto yasyāḥ
vinaśyati//
Agni Purāṇa, 265.3.
37. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III, 9.11.
38. Vāyu Purāṇa, 8. 1/2.
39. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 7, 172-173.
40. Kane, Op Cit., p. 431.
41. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I, 2, 5.16
42. buddhirūpaśīlalakṣaṇasampannāmarogāmupayachhet,
Āśvaśāyana Gṛihyasūtra, I, 53.
43. Śaṅkhāyana Gṛihyasūtra, I, 56.
44. Manusmṛiti, III, 8, 10.
45. Ibid, III, 9.
46. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III, 10.
47. Padma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 223, 17-22, 45.
48. Skanda Purāṇa, IV, 76, 38-42.
49. Ibid IV, 135. 6-7.

50. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 439.
51. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 440.
52. Gautam Dharmasūtra, 18. 20-23.
53. Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, IV. 1, 12, 15.
54. Kane, Op Cit. 442-443; Altekar, Op Cit., pp. 49-65.
55. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 272.47.
56. Brahmavaivārta Purāṇa, 1, 126.8.
57. Ibid, 1, 72.22.
58. Ibid, 1, 34.22.
59. Skanda Purāṇa, VI, 198. 40-41.
60. romakāle tu samprāpte somo bhunkte tu kanyakām/
 rajahkāle tu gandharvā vahnistu kucadarśane//
 tasmadvivāhayetkanyām yavannartumatī bhavet//
 vivahastvashtavarshāyāḥ kanyāyāḥ śāsyate budhaiḥ//
 Padma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 120. 6-7.
61. Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 40-43.
62. Brahma Purāṇa, 165. 7, 13-14.
63. Varshaikaguṇām bhāryamudvahettriguṇassvayam
 Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III 10. 16.
64. Āśvalāyana Gṛihyasūtra, 1.6,
 Gautama Dharmasūtra, IV. 6-13,
 Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, I, 11,
 Manusmṛiti, III. 21.
65. Manusmṛiti, III. 27-34.
66. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III. 10.

67. . Garuḍa Purāṇa, I. 95.11.
68. prājāpatyastathā brāhma daivārshau cātisobhanā
gāndharvarscāsurascaiva rākshasaśca piśācakaḥ
prātibho ghātānasceti vivāhaḥ kathitā daśa
Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 241. 35-36.
69. sulkam aṇvapi kanyāyāḥ kanyāvīkrayapāpakṛit.
ibid, IV. 38.17
70. S.A. Dange, Encyclopaedia of Purāṇic Beliefs
and Practices, Vol. III, p. 1001, n. 3.
71. kālakṛitā krayakṛitā pitridattā svayamyutā/
nārīpurushayorevamudvāhastu caturvidhaḥ//
kālakṛitā tu veśyā syātkrayakṛitā tu dāsikā/
gāndharvodvāhitā yuktā bhāryā syātpitridattakā^t//
samānadharminī yuktā bhāryā pitrivasandā/
Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 4. 15. 4-5.
72. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, IV. 6. 35-47.
73. Vāyu Purāṇa, 2. 15.
74. Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, I. 2.16.
75. Matsya Purāṇa. 24. 30-32.
76. Vāyu Purāṇa, 10. 11.
77. Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 9.36.
78. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, V. 28.6.
79. Ibid, III. 18.87.
80. Kālikā Purāṇa, Chapter 14.
81. Altekar, pp. Cit. p. 43.
82. Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa, Chapter 4.

- 82A. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 522; tvam me patistvam me
bhāryetyevam kanyāvarayoḥ paraṣparam niyamaban-
dhāt pitrādikarṭṭrikadānaḥvirapekshādya vivāḥ sa
gāndharva ityarthah/ evam syayamvaro'pi
gāndharvavivāha eva/ Vīramitrodaya on
yājñavalkyasmṛiti 1.61.
83. Devībhagāvata Purāṇa Skandha III, Chapters
14-23.
84. Ibid, Skandha IX. Chapter 12-14.
85. pitroranuḥṇayā kanyā yo gachhedvidhinā binā/
trirātropoṣhaṇāḥchuddhistāmevodvahayettadā//
jñātaḥ pitribhyām yo gatvā paroḍhām tadvināśane/
vidhavā jāyate neyam pūrvagantāramapnuyāt//
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 4.8. 17, 20.
86. Kālikā Purāṇa, Chapter 85.
87. Yājñavalkya smṛiti, 1.60.
88. R.C. Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, Vol. II,
pp. 370, 395.
89. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 897.
90. Bhaviṣhyottara Purāṇa, Chapter 148.
91. Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 40.
92. Bauddhāyana Dharmasūtra, I. 11, 20-21.
93. kanyāvikrayiṇam brahmanna paśyedvadanam budhaḥ/
drishtvā cājñānato vāpikuryānmārtandaḍarsanam//
Padma Purāṇa, Brahmakhaṇḍa, 24. 26.
94. Altekar, Op. Cit. pp. 151-153.

95. Skanda Purāṇa, VII, 1, 167, 36-40.
- 95A. Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra, 17. 19,
Vishnu Dharmasūtra, 15. 8-9.
Manusmṛiti, IX. 176.
Nāradaśmṛiti (śrīpūṣa), V. 45.
96. Dange, Op. Cit. Vol. III, p. 996, sakritkanyā
pradātavyā haranṣtām cauraṇaḍabhāk; Agni
Purāṇa, 154. 3.
97. samvatsareṇa kṣhīṇāyurbhavishyati nṛpātmajaḥ/
sakritkanyā pradiyante cintayitvā narādhipaḥ//
Matsya Purāṇa, 208. 13.
98. Brīhnnarādiya Purāṇa, IV. 20-27.
99. Dange, Op. Cit. Vol. III, p. 996.
100. Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa, II. 87. 11.
101. Hazra, Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and
Customs, p. 212.
102. Ibid. p. 138; According to Kane Agni Purāṇa
can not be dated earlier than 600 A.D. and
later than 100 A.D. History of Dharmasāstra,
Vol. V, pt. II, p. 910.
103. Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II, 6 13, 1 & 3.
104. Gautama Dharmasūtra, IV. 1.
105. Manusmṛiti, II. 12.
- 105A. Nāradaśmṛiti (śrīpūṣa), V. 4.
106. Matsya Purāṇa, 30. 18.
107. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 4.1.

108. Vāyu Purāṇa, 99. 18.
109. Brihannāradiya Purāṇa, 22. 13.
110. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 113. 34-36.
111. Vishṇudharma Purāṇa, Chapter 49.
112. Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa, V. 48.
113. Manusmṛiti, III. 5.
114. pañcamīm mātṛipakshācca pitṛipakshācca saptamīm,
Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 10. 23.
115. Agni Purāṇa, 154.8.
116. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II, pt. I,
p. 497.
117. Baudhayāna Dharmasūtra, pravarādhyaya, p. 54.
118. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 7.39.
119. Matsya Purāṇa, 4.2.
120. Matsya Purāṇa, 195. 202,
Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa, I, 111-118.
121. parasparam na vivahāscaturvidyatrividyaḥ
Skanda Purāṇa III, 2. 39. 18.
122. Padma Purāṇa (Brahmakhaṇḍa), 10. 12.
123. Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II. 5. 11, 12-13.
124. Ibid, 1.10.28.19.
125. Devala quoted in Gṛihastharatnākara p. 85.
126. Mālātī Mādhava, II. 14, V. 19.
127. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 554.
128. Ibid.

129. . ekabhāryaḥ sukhī naiva bahubharyāḥ kadācana,
Brāhmavaivarta Purāṇa (Prakṛitikhanda, 6. 64).
130. Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1.15. 103-105,
Vāyu Purāṇa, 63. 40-42,
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 37. 42-44,
Matsya Purāṇa, 5. 10-12.
131. Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1.7. 24-27,
Vāyu Purāṇa, 10, 25-30,
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 9. 50-53.
132. Vāyu Purāṇa, 99. 18,
Matsya Purāṇa, 48. 16.
133. Vishṇu Purāṇa, V. 21. 5.
Matsya Purāṇa, 70. 2.
134. Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1. 15. 8-68.
135. Skanda Purāṇa, VII. 1. 37.19.
136. ābhīrī tridaśādhiśa tathāham bahubhartrikā,
ibid, III. 12. 10.
137. Ibid, VI. 192. 54.
138. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 20-41,
Matsya Purāṇa, 50. 53.
139. Mahābhārata (Ādiparva) Chapter 196.
140. Kane, Op. Cit. 554-555.

POSITION OF WIDOW

Before we actually take into account the Purāṇic passages and Purāṇic view of the position of the widow, it would be worthwhile to remark that the word 'Vidhavā' occurs several times in the R̥gveda. Kane has traced this term in the following passages of the R̥gveda; IV, 18.12, X. 18.7, X. 402 & 8.¹ The noted scholar rightly observes that these passages contain very little that is indicative of their condition in society.² A passage of R̥gveda alludes to the rapid movements of the Maruts, due to which the earth trembles like a woman deprived of her husband.³ The passage implies that widows trembled either from sorrow or from fear of molestation. Probably Winternitz is not totally wrong in drawing a dismal picture of the condition of a Hindu widow.⁴ Thus, Manusmṛiti enjoins that 'a woman when her husband is dead, may, if she chooses, emancipate her body by subsisting on flowers, roots and fruits, but she should not take the name of a stranger male. Till her death she should be forbearing, observe vows, should be celibate and should hanker after that super-eminent code of conduct that is proscribed for women devoted to their husbands. On her husband's death, if a virtuous woman abides by the rule of celibacy, she goes to heaven though she be sonless as the ancient students did.'⁵ The injunction of

Manusmṛiti, thus, shows that the position of the Hindu widow was miserable and her lot was most unenviable. She had not only to lead a life of perfect celibacy, but she had to act like an ascetic, being poorly fed (only once a day) and poorly clad.

As regards Purāṇic account, we start with the text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The text contains two references of note. The first one relates to the Mārishā legend. In the chapter on marriage, we have already mentioned that, she was married to the ten Prācetasas and thus the evidence may be taken in the sense of polyandry. In the subsequent account the Purāṇa relates that she zealously worshipped Viṣṇu, who, being gratified by her adoration appeared to her, and desired her to demand a boon; on which she revealed to him the wishes of her heart. "I have been a widow, lord," she exclaimed "even from my infancy, and my birth has been in vain."⁶ Thus three aspects of woman's position are summed up in one and the same legend, namely; child marriage, polyandry and child widowship. The second reference is available in the syamantaka-legend. Describing the valour of Krishna, the passage relates that

"there is no one even among the immortals, whose praises are celebrated throughout the universe, who is capable of contending with the wielder of the discus, at the stamp of whose foot the three worlds tremble; whose hand makes the wives of the asuras' widows."⁷ In connection with the narrative of Repukā, the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that the widowhood is that type of misfortune, which is unbearable.⁸ The texts of Matsya Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relate that the life of Rati had become inauspicious after the death of her husband, Kāma.^{8A} The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa also mentions that, consequent upon her being a widow, Rati had taken off her ornaments and her hairs were disarranged.⁹ There is reference to unclean clothes and disarranged hair of widows in the text of Matsya Purāṇa.¹⁰ In another context, the text equates the widows with the poor and miserable persons.¹¹

The text of Skanda Purāṇa depict a very miserable and depressing picture of the condition of a widow. She is said to be most inauspicious. It is ordained that even a glance at her should be avoided. It is said that, if a widow is seen when one is starting out, one should come back; for if one goes he is sure to die.¹² The subsequent

description is more alarming. It says that the blessing of widows is like the hissings of poisonous serpents; hence a householder should be afraid of their blessings, as he should be afraid of demonesses.¹³ She is also warned to hear any news regarding love or love-sport. It is also said that, she should not see any beasts couplating; she should not sleep on a bedstead.¹⁴ The text of *Brahmayvaivarta Purāṇa* ordains that a widow should keep herself away from decoration, and she should not look into a mirror.¹⁵

In its chapter on *strīdharmā*, the text of *Bṛīhaddharma Purāṇa* alludes to the duties of women in general and to those of widows in particular. It ordains that, the women should serve their husbands, remain faithful to them even after their death. They should not forsake them under any circumstances nor should they fast or perform any *vratā* without their permission. The text categorically lays down that "A devoted wife should follow her husband in his death. By doing so she delivers him even from great sins. Women have no work greater than this, because (by virtue of this work) they enjoy pleasures in heaven in company with their husbands for

a manvantara. A wife, who, with her mind absorbed in (the thoughts of) her husband, dies by entering the fire with a favourite thing of his, even if he died long ago, attains the same state." In too open words, the text lays down that the widows must live a highly restricted life and abstain from wearing ^{had} and clothes, sleeping on bedsteads and indulging in all other kinds of luxury. Childless widows are called avirā. There are two kinds of avirās, namely, adattā and dattā.¹⁶

The details of miserable condition of the widow are also available in the text of Skanda Purāṇa. The text states 'The widow is more un auspicious than all other inauspicious things; at the sight of a widow no success can be had in any undertaking; expecting one's (widowed) mother all widows are void of auspiciousness; a wise man should avoid their blessings like the poison of a snake.'¹⁷ The Kūśikhaṇḍa of the same Purāṇa lays down that the widow should always take one meal a day and never a second; or she may perform the observance of fast for a month or undergo the penance of cāndrāyaṇa. A widow who sleeps on a cot would make her husband fall (in hell). A widow should never wash her body with fragrant unguements nor should enjoy the fragrance

of sweet smelling things; she should everyday perform tarpaṇa with sesame, water and kuśa grass for her husband, his father and grandfather after repeating their names and gotra; she should not sit in a bullock cart even when about to die, she should not put on a bodice, should not wear dyed garments.¹⁸

Much has been said about the custom of the tonsure of widows. It is said to be of recent origin and growth.¹⁹ The motive underlying it was to make the outward appearance of the widow in harmony with the ideal of renunciation, that she was expected to follow. Monks and nuns used to shave their heads; it was felt that widows should do the same. It was hoped that this would help in creating an ascetic atmosphere around her, so necessary for her resolution to lead a celibate life. The procedure was calculated to destroy the beauty of face; it was thought that it would incidentally afford the widow a greater protection against the unwanted attention of undesirable characters. It has been emphasized that among Jainas and Buddhists, nuns used to be shaved. The custom of the tonsure of widows seems to have been borrowed from this practice.²⁰ Reference to this practice is available in the Kṛṣṇikhaṇḍa of Skanda Purāṇa. It states that the tying up into

a braid of hair leads to the bondage of the husband. Therefore a widow should always shave her head. It is added that, if it is not done, it is harmful to the relatives of the dead husband.²¹ It is significant that the said passage of Skanda Purāṇa is quoted in the Madanapārijāta and other nibandhas. This shows that for sometime at least before the 14th century A.D. (when Madanaparijata was composed) tonsure of widows was in vogue. In this connection, Kane observes that how and exactly when this practice arose can not be established with certainty. That it is comparatively a later innovation can, however, be demonstrated. The noted scholar talks of the possibility of two propositions; that widows were tonsured on the death of their husbands, just as sons were tonsured, that widows were required by the texts to tonsure themselves continually from time to time till their death, though sons who had to tonsure themselves are not required to do so afterwards.²² Kane further notes that, the advocates of this practice rely upon three Vedic passages, namely, Ṛigveda X. 40.2, Āpastamba Mantra Pāṭha 1.4.9 and Atharvaveda, 12.2.60. As regards Ṛigveda X.40.2, it refers to Vidhavā and probably niyoga, but there is nothing about tonsure in that verse. Āpastamba Mantra Pāṭha 1.5.9. Contains the word

'Vikesī', which means a maiden with dishevelled hair. It can not mean a widow whose hair is tonsured. The passage of Atharvaveda relates to a marriage hymn. The word 'Vikesī' used in it can only mean a girl with loosened hair. As Kane points out here it is impossible to hold that 'Vikesī' means tonsured, as the mantra is part of the marriage hymn.²³

We may reiterate that the passage of Skanda Purāṇa, quoted above, can not be dated earlier than 9th century A.D. and consequently custom of tonsure of widow has to be dated in this light. In this connection Altekar has referred to Vedavyāsa-smṛiti and other smṛities, which recommended that if a widow does not become a Satī, she should tonsure her head. These smṛiti-texts are later than the 9th century A.D.²⁴

Like custom of tonsure, that of Satī is integrated with the position of a Hindu widow. Sociologists are of the view that in prehistoric times there prevailed a belief in several societies that the life and needs of the dead in the next world are more or less similar to those in this life. It therefore became a pious duty of surviving relations to provide a dead person with all the

things that he usually needed them when alive. Especially when an important personage like a king, a nobleman or a warrior died, it was felt that his usual paraphernalia should be sent with him. He would of course require his wives, horses and servants in the next world; and it would therefore be necessary and desirable to kill these all, and burn or bury them.²⁵

It may be noted that in the great controversy that raged at the legal prohibition of the Sati custom by Lord William Bentinck, it was argued that the custom had a Vedic sanction. It was maintained that the funeral hymn in the R̥gveda refers to widow's ascending the funeral pyre. The case, however, could be rendered plausible only by fraudulently changing the last word of the stanza from agre into agneḥ. Altekar rightly observes that the verse in question refers to women with their husbands living coming forward to anoint the corpse before it was consigned to flames, and contains no reference whatsoever to any widow immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre.²⁶

It has been observed that, we begin to get stray references to the custom of Sati from about

300 B.C. The Mahābhārata, a major portion of which was composed at about this time, records only a few cases of Sati. The most important one among them is that of Mādrī. But in her case, the assembled sages try their best to dissuade from her resolve. But she did not move from her determination (1, 138. 71-72). In the Mausalaparvan of the Mahābhārata four wives of Vasudeva, namely, Devakī, Bhadrā, Rohiṇī and Mādirā ascended his funeral pyre (XVI. 7, 18). When the news of Kṛṣṇa's death reaches Hastināpura, five of the wives, namely, Rukmiṇī, Gāndhārī, Sahyā, Haimavatī and Jāmbavatī ascend the funeral pyre without their husband's body. Satya-bhāmā retires to forest for practising penance (XVI, 7, 73-74).²⁷

Coming to the Purāṇic references, we start with the text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa. It states that Arjun having found the bodies of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, performed for them, and the rest of the slain, the obsequial rites. The eight queens of Kṛṣṇa, who have been named, with Rukmiṇī at their head embraced the body of Hari and entered the funeral pyre. Revatī also embracing the corpse of Balarāma, entered the blazing pile, which was cool to her, happy in contact with her lord. Hearing these events Ugrasena and

Anakadundukhi, with Devakī and Rohiṇī Committed themselves to the flames.²⁸ In connection with the daughter of Kāśirāja, the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa relates that she followed her husband in death and mounted cheerfully his funeral pile.^{28A} In another context, the same text narrates that as a result of the curse of sage Vasishṭha, king Saudāsa was so much delusioned that he took the flesh of Brāhmaṇa, whose wife entered the flames.²⁹ The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa narrates that Roṇukā resolved to die after she saw that her husband is dead. She did this in order to protect her from future insults.³⁰ Matsya Purāṇa relates that Rati decided to die after her husband Kāma was burnt to ashes. But she changed her decision after she received necessary instructions of Śiva.³¹ The texts of Vishṇu, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa relate that king Bāhu died in the neighbourhood of the residence of sage Aurva. His queen having constructed his pile, ascended it with the determination of accompanying him in death. But the sage Aurva forbade her, because she was pregnant and was bearing a universal emperor in her womb.³² The text of Padma Purāṇa gives a detailed account of procedure of Satī. A woman committing Satī is given a holy bath, adorned with ornaments, is made to put collyrium in her eyes, flowers and sandal-paste; she is asked to wear the holy thread (maṅgala-sūtra); her feet are

decorated with lac-dye. She is required to be smiling and should give various gifts. If she had committed any sin or adultery, she is to get purified and then ascend the funeral pyre.³³ The Brahmaivaivarta Purāṇa relates that Reṇukā slept in the pyre taking her husband Jamadagmi in her bosom.³⁴ The text of Nārada Purāṇa reveals that women having young children, being pregnant and those that have not attained the age of menstruation, or have yet to get menstruation are not allowed to commit Satī. Similarly women in their monthly period are not to ^{commit} ~~commit~~ it.³⁵ In the account of the 'goddess' Mṛigīmukhī, there is reference to her deification in the text of Skanda Purāṇa. She is said to have been a woman with a deer's face and human body in her previous birth. When her husband died she committed Satī with him. Hence she came to be regarded as a goddess.³⁶ The text of Vāmana Purāṇa relates that king Jyotiṣmāna, the son of Vapuṣmāna, was practising penance for getting a son. His wife attended on him in his austerities. Once the ^{saptarishis} ~~saptarishis~~ saw her and asked her why she was so emaciated. After knowing the reason they blessed the couple and asked them to return to their capital and that they would have seven sons. The queen conceived; but the king died even before the foetus was well developed. Though

prevented by the people, the queen ascended the funeral pyre of her husband to commit Satī. When both were getting burnt, a ball of flesh fell out from the burning pyre into the water (nearby) and it burst into seven parts, out of which the Maruts were born.³⁷ The same text further relates that in the ^Yyambhuva manvantara Savana, the son of Priyavrata died issueless. His wife Sudevā was directed by a divine voice to accompany her husband's body on the pyre. She did it so suddenly, that the king got up gaining his life and glory, and came out along with his wife. They flew into the sky, where his wife got up her 'period' of menstruation. The king had union with her on the 6th day, after they remained in the sky, due to divine grace for five days. While he was having sex with his wife, his semen fell down from the sky, and was seen by the wives of the sages. They thought that the semen that looked like the cloud to be nectar, collected it on a lotus and drank. Suddenly they were devoid of lustre and were discarded by their husbands. Later, they gave birth to seven sons, who came to be called Maruts as they were asked not to weep.³⁸

As regards niyoga or levirate, it would be worthwhile to evaluate the Purāṇic references in the light of what has been said about it by early

scholars on the basis of other evidences. It has been observed that, in early societies, a son by levirate was always preferred to a son by adoption. An adopted son pre-supposed a tremendous legal fiction, for which society was not yet ripe. A Vedic sage declares that an adoptive son born of another is no son at all. He was an absolute stranger; he had no blood of the family running in his veins. A son born of *niyoga* had the blood of the mother. He had of course not the blood of his father, but he had at least that of a near relative. A son by *niyoga* therefore resembled a real son as nearly as possible. It is for this reason that in the list subsidiary sons given in *Dharmaśāstras*, a son by *niyoga* usually occupies a second position, coming immediately next after the real or *aurasa* son. The custom was in fact fairly common in early times in India.³⁹

As far the *Purāṇas*, we start with the text of *Garuḍa Purana*. The text reveals that *niyoga* was so called because of appointment of a person to procreate an issue from the wife of another person. In such cases the husband is either dead or incapable of procreation. The practice is said to have been discarded in the Kali age. *Niyoga* is to be had generally after the consent of the elders in the

family of the husband, and the most suitable person to be appointed for this purpose is younger brother of the husband. If he is not available other close relation would do. The child born would be called kshetraja; as kshetra (field) is the wife, the owner of the child is the husband proper. The man to act is to smear himself with clarified butter, and have sexual union only once every period till the conception takes place.⁴⁰ The text of Matsya Purāṇa depicts a unique case of niyoga in the account of Dīrghatamas and Sudeshṇā, the wife of king Bali. Here Bali does not appear to be unable to procreate on own wife. It relates that, the sage Dīrghatamas was son of Mamatā. He was born blind, as he was cursed to be so even as a foetus by Brihaspati, who had forced union with ^{Mamatā} ~~Maurata~~, his brother's wife, when the latter had already a foetus from his elder brother. It is narrated that, when he grew to youth, Dīrghatamas caught a bull that came to his hermitage. The bull taught him the way to free sex. When Dīrghatamas began practising free sex with his younger brother's wife who was like a daughter-in-law to him, his relations caught him, bound him and threw him in the river. Along the course of the river, he reached the kingdom of Bali, where he was brought up by the king's servants. When the king knew that he

was the sage Dīrghatamas, he was very happy and requested the latter to procreate on his queen Sudeshṇā. But, she did not approach the sage due to his unpleasant appearance. Instead, she sent her maid-servant. Dīrghatamas had union with the maid-servant, who gave birth, later, to a son who is famous sage Kakshīvant. When the queen was asked by the king next day, she told the truth. He again entreated upon her to approach the sage the following night. When she went, the sage knew the reason and told her another method. He told her to smear his body with curds mixed with liquorice and salt, and to lick all parts of his body. The queen smeared his body and licked all parts except the anus. Consequently the son was born without anus. The sage, however, consoled her by saying that the son would get her all joy.⁴¹ The same narrative is available in the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.⁴²

The text of Skanda Purāṇa gives another account of the practice of niyoga. It related that the practice of niyoga was resorted to by the wives of the Kshatriyas that were killed by Paraśurāma. They approached brāhmaṇas for favour, just prior to their monthly period. The text adds that, this they did with a view to procreating sons and not to satisfying any sex-urge.⁴³ It is said that, when king Bṛihadbala

of Ānarta died issueless, his 105 wives gave birth to equal number of sons, after they had sexual union with a brāhmaṇa, after taking bath in the holy kuṇḍa, known as "suputradakuṇḍa". It is narrated that one of the wives got enamoured of the brāhmaṇa and, as they were proceeding to take bath to the kuṇḍa, even on the road-side she had sex with the brāhmaṇa. The son thus born came to be known as Aṭa, as he was conceived while going by the path.⁴⁴

Account of niyoga is available in the text of Devībhagavata Purāṇa, which alludes to the Mahabhārata episode. It relates Śāntanu's marriage with Satyawatī, and the birth of Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya, Citrāṅgada's death in a fight with a gandharva of the same name; Vicitravīrya's marriage with Ambikā and Ambālikā, daughter's of the king of Kāśī, and his untimely death by consumption; Satyawatī's appointing of Vyāsa to raise children on the childless wives of Vicitravīrya, and the consequent births of Dhṛitarāshṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura.⁴⁵

Some Purāṇa texts, however do not look to the custom of niyoga with favour. Thus the text of Bṛihadharma Purāṇa lays down that a householder must regard his elder brother's wife as his mother

and look upon his younger brother's wife and his sister's daughter as his own daughters, and must not cohabit with these relatives even unwillingly.⁴⁶ While describing good customs and usages which were to be followed by the people, the text says that the people of the Kali age, being given to sinful acts were not fit for practising that dharma (law and custom) which was meant for the people in Kṛita age. Hence a twice-born man of the Kali age was to avoid the following : Practice of Celibacy (as a student) for a long period, carrying a kamaṇḍalu (as a forest hermit or as a wandering mendicant), slaughter of cows (in sacrifices), performance of human and horse sacrifices, drinking of wine, sexual union with his own brother's wife etc.⁴⁷ As already discussed in the chapter on marriage, the text of Bṛihannāradaīya Purāṇa encourages due performance of yugadharma by all castes, but names a number of lawful practices, which being considered unfavourable for the attainment of heaven and disliked by the people, have been forbidden by wise men in the Kali age. Among these practices, raising of issue by the husband's younger brother finds prominent mention.⁴⁸

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4. Winternitz, "Die Fraue", pp. 86-88.
5. Manusmriti, V. 157-160.
6. Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1, 15-63.
7. Ibid, IV. 13. 85.
8. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 30. 25, 37.
- 8A. Matsya Purāṇa, 153, 273.
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV. 30. 37.
9. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV, 30. 44.
10. Matsya Purāṇa, 154. 19.
11. Ibid, 215. 61.
12. Skanda Purāṇa, II, 9, 22. 11, 12
13. Ibid, II. 9, 22. 13.
14. Ibid, II., 9, 22. 65-66.
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16. Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, Chapter 8.
17. amangalobhyaḥ sarvebhyo Vidhavā syādamaṅgaḷā/
vidhavadarśāt siddhiḥ kvāpi jātu na jāyate/
vihāya mātaram caikam sarva maṅgalavarjitā/
tadāśīshamapi prājñastya jedāsīvishopamam//
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18. Skanda Purāṇa, Kāśīkhaṇḍa, IV, vv. 75 ff.
19. A.S. Altekar, The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p. 159.
20. Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 161.
21. vidhāvākabarībandho bhartribandhāya jāyate/
śirasō vāpanam tasmāt karyam vidhāvayā sadā//
Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 4. 74.
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33. Padma Purāṇa, Pātālakhāṇḍa, 102, 7-73.
34. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Gaṇapati-khaṇḍa, 28. 41-43
35. Nārada Purāṇa, 7. 52-53, 65.
36. Skanda Purāṇa, VII. 2. 7. 24-30.
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40. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 95. 16-17.
41. Matsya Purāṇa, 48, 42 ff; 71 ff.
42. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 3, 74. 68 ff.
43. Skanda Purāṇa, VI, 128. 19 ff.
44. aṭatā rājamargeṇa vipreṇa utpāditah,
aṭako bhupatistasmāt; Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 128,
35 ff, 48 ff.
45. Devībhāgavata Purāṇa, Skandha, 1, Chapter 20.
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48. Brihannāradiya Purāṇa, 22, 12-16.

WOMEN AND RELIGION

It has been observed that in the Vedic period, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges, which men possessed. Some of them were even authors of Vedic hymns. There are instances of women offering Vedic sacrifices all by themselves. There is allusion to a lady, named Viśvavārā, getting up early in the morning and starting the sacrifice all by herself (Rigveda, V. 28.2). Vedic passages reveal that presence of woman and her co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. This naturally increased her religious value. Man could not become a spiritual whole, unless he was accompanied by his wife (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, I, 2.5). The general belief was that gods do not accept the oblations offered by a bachelor (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V. I, 6.10); the husband alone can not go to heaven; in the symbolical ascent to heaven in the sacrifice, he has to call his wife to accompany him on the occasion. (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V. 2, 1.8). A son was indispensable for spiritual well-being of the life to come, and he could be had only through wife. She was thus indispensable from the spiritual and religious points of view. This circumstance was responsible for ensuring her a religious status as high as that of her husband. For this obvious reason religious prayers and sacrifices were offered

jointly by the husband and the wife. There are several references to couples waxing old in their joint worship of gods. (Rigveda, 1, 72.5; 1, 33.3; V. 53.15). The wife used to take an active and real part in family sacrifices. Like the husband, she too had to perform a special upanayana on the occasion of some sacrifices. She had her own hut in the sacrificial compound, and also her own cow to provide her with sacred milk during the sacrifice (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, X. 2, 3.1; XIV. 3. 1, 35). In the early Vedic period, the duty of chanting musically the Sāma songs seems to have been usually performed by the wife, later on it came to be entrusted to a special class of male priests called Udgātṛis (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIV. 3.1..35). The wife used to pound the sacrificial rice, give bath to the animal that was to be immolated and lay in bricks, when altar was to be built (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, VI. 5, 3.1; III, 8.2, 1-6). She participated with her husband in the preparation of the offering, the consecration of the fire, the offering of the oblations and the concluding ceremonies. She herself had to recite some formulae. If the husband was away on a journey, the wife alone performed the various sacrifices, which the couple had to offer jointly.¹

Reference has been made to Indrāṇi, who proudly claims in one place that she had started some rites and rituals (Ṛigveda, X, 86.10). Gods and goddesses are usually fashioned after the human model. It is not improbable that a few lady theologians may have made some contributions to the development of the Vedic ritual. There were some sacrifices which could be offered by women alone. Some of these may be mentioned here. Sītā sacrifice, it was intended to promote rich harvest. Rudrayāga, it was intended to secure good luck to maidens in marriage. Rudrabali, it was intended to ensure prosperity and fecundity among the cattle (Pāraskar Gṛihya Sūtra, II. 17; III, 8.10). If the co-operation of the husband was unavailable for any reason, the wife could offer the sacrifices all alone. On the morning of Rāma's installation as crown prince, Kauśalyā is seen performing all alone the Svāstiyāga to ensure felicity to her son (Rāmāyaṇa, II, 20.15). She was the neglected wife and probably she felt that it would be too much to expect her husband to come to participate in the sacrifice. At that time he was as a matter of fact engaged in assuaging the wrath of his favourite wife Kaikeyī. Similar is the case of Tārā, wife of Vāli. She was performing alone the Svāstiyāga, when her husband was about to issue out to fight

with Sugrīva. This was probably because Vāli was then too busily engaged in equipping himself to find time to participate in wife's sacrifice. Thus, although the normal practice was that the couple would jointly perform the various sacrifices, yet very often husbands used to leave the whole affair to the exclusive charge of their wives, when they were otherwise very busy.

There were, however, some restrictions on the religious status of a wife who belonged to a lower caste. Thus, Manu ordains that only the wife of the same caste could be associated with the husband in the sacrifices. A Śūdra wife or a wife for whom a bride-price had been paid, was not entitled to any religious rights and privileges. The participation in sacrifices presupposed Vedic study. The upanayana or Initiation ceremony of girls used to take place as regularly as that of boys at the normal time. The Vedic age held that Brahmçarya discipline and training was as much necessary for girls as it was for boys (brahmaçaryeṇa, kanyā yuvāṇam vindate patim, Atharvaveda, XI. 5. 18). It was apprehended that if the most important Sanskāra of upanayana was not performed in the case of girls, women would be automatically reduced to the status of Śūdras;

how then could Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas be born of them (Hārīta, XXI, 20 quoted at commentary of Madhavācārya on Parāśara Smṛiti, Vol. 1, part 2, p. 48). Upanayana of women was absolutely necessary, if the cultural tradition of the different Aryan classes was to be preserved. As long as upanayan of girls was common, women used to offer morning and evening prayers as regularly as men. The Rāmāyaṇa makes specific reference to Sītā discharging this religious duty (Rāmāyaṇa, II, 87. 19). In due course of time minor religious rituals like the Jātakarma, Nāmakaraṇa, Cūḍā, etc. were originally performed just as regularly in the case of girls as they were in that of boys. When upanayana was discontinued in the case of girls, it began to be advocated that other rituals also should be permitted to them, only if they were performed without the recitation of the Vedic mantras. This position has been taken up by almost all the Smṛiti Writers.²

As far the Purāṇic references, we may start with Līṅga Purāṇa. It prescribes that women are not entitled to worship a ^{deity} ~~deity~~ independently. They should offer worship through brāhmaṇas.³ Nārada Purāṇa states that a Śiva-līṅga or an idol of Viṣṇu worshipped by a woman should not be bowed down to. A

person who bows down to such a liṅga or idol of Viṣṇu is said to go hell along with all the members of his family.^{3A} When a liṅga is established and consecrated according to the proper rites, a Śūdra or woman is not allowed to touch it. Those women or a Śūdra who touch the idol are said to go to hell.⁴

The text of Skanda Purāṇa, ordains that there are six causes of fall in case of a woman or a Śūdra. These are enumerated as under : muttering of a mantra, penance, going on a pilgrimage, mastering a mantra, sacrificing and propitiating a deity directly.⁵

The text of Kūrma Purāṇa prescribes that in the case of funeral rites a woman has a place. For a departed person who is son-less, his wife is eligible to perform the funeral rites; and if the wife is not living, his brother may perform.⁶ According to the text of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the wife comes last; and in that case funeral rites and śrāddha are to be performed without the mantras.⁷ According to Matsya Purāṇa, in the event of her husband performing the śrāddha rite in the house, and when the balls of the rice are offered, the wife is enjoined to eat the middle piṇḍa, while the

proper mantra indicating conception and progeny is being recited. This is believed to ensure pregnancy and the birth of a son.⁸

The text of Agni Purāṇa reveals that women played an important part in various festivals. The touching and kicking of the Aśoka tree by a young woman seems to have been most popular.⁹ Some more details regarding such women are available in the texts of Padma Purāṇa^{9A} and Matsya Purāṇa.¹⁰ They were called suvāsinī. They are mentioned especially in the contexts of vows or religious occasions. It is enjoined that after a visit to the holy place Pusnkara, a gathering should be arranged, wherein suvāsinīs should be invited. Various drinks are said to be offered to them, including grape-juice mixed with bits of jaggery and wine. All suvāsinīs are to be respected and worshipped. The gifts given to them include cloth, saffron, coconut and sandal. They should be given collyrium for applying it to the eyes and sindūra to be applied at the parting of the hair on the head. In a festive occasion in respect of goddess Lalitā, suvāsinīs are enjoined to be worshipped, with the accompaniment of songs and instrumental music. They should be offered red clothes and red flowers, and sindūra should be applied to them on their heads.

Purāṇas also prescribe rituals to be observed by women for procuring progeny. For a woman who does not conceive, or for one whose children die, or who gets abortion, the following remedy is prescribed. According to one remedy seven women, having their husbands living, should be worshipped. These women should give the woman a bath.¹¹ Another remedy is that the woman in question should be given bath in a lake full of lotuses, or she should be given bath near the Aśoka tree.¹² A woman desirous of a son is advised to take bath in the sea.¹³ If the woman fears abortion, she should be asked to eat parched rice along with rice-water; or she may be asked to lick yaṣṭimadhu, wine of grapes, honey or/and ghṛe.¹⁴ A woman is forbidden to cut a Kuṣmāṇḍa (red pumpkin gourd) for fear of being unhealthy and unfortunate for the next seven births.¹⁴

With reference to the religious status of a pativratā, the text of Bhavishya Purāṇa relates that one who honours her husband and is chaste is pativratā; one who is also devoted to the gods and the brāhmaṇas is called Mānushī; she is said to be always pure, takes bath regularly, is of adorable odour, takes less food, is of words, is the goddess.¹⁶ According to the text of Skanda Purāṇa lack of chastity

is one of the greatest sins that a woman can commit. Six prominent vices are mentioned in case of women. These are mentioned as under; drinking, association with evil persons, separation from the husband, going away from the house, being given to sleep anywhere, anytime and stay at other's house. An unchaste woman is termed Mahishī. In another context, this term is applied to a woman who, being a widow is unchaste; and a person who spends a night (or nights) with her is termed Māshika. An unchaste woman is called also Vṛishalī. The term is explained thus : "a woman who leaves her Vṛisha (bull-husband) and takes another one". Seven types of Vṛishali is are mentioned. These are as under; cāṇḍālī, Bandhakī, Veśyā, a maiden that has reached menstruation, one who is deflowered and is yet unmarried, kuṭilā and sagotrā.¹⁷

The text of Brahmaparvata Purāṇa ordains that a woman, sexually enjoyed by another person is not to be left. It is emphasized that in such a case she is discarded due to sexual act; but she could be purified by continuous austerity. However, she would not be allowed to cook food for the manes or for the gods, nor is she allowed to participate in worship.¹⁸ On the other hand the texts of Skanda

Purāṇa¹⁹ and Agni Purāṇa²⁰ (~~36-37~~) state that women never be sexually polluted by any one; they are always pure; because every month they become pure after the monthly period.

The texts of Skanda Purāṇa,²¹ Agni Purāṇa²² and Garuḍa Purāṇa²³ lay down that women are sexually enjoyed by three gods prior to marriage; they are Soma, Gandharva and Agni. Soma gave them all purity; Gandharvas gave them blessed speech, Agni gave them 'sacrificial worthiness' (sarvamedhyatām); hence they are pure. Agni Purāṇa states that, if a woman conceives from union with a person of another varṇa, she remains impure as long as she does not release that dāt. When it is released she becomes pure again after menstruation.²⁴

The Purāṇas also prescribe Vratas to be observed by the women. Thus the text of Bhavishya Purāṇa²⁵ refer to Āśoka-vrata, in which Āśoka tree was worshipped. The tree is decorated with flags and strips of new cloth. The woman who performs this vrata was required to make her husband and his younger brother to stand by, sesame and whole grains in hand was to be offered to the tree. After this she worshipped the tree. The worship of Āśoka tree is

believed to remove all sorrows of the worshipper.²⁶ A woman could also worship a golden or silver Aśoka tree with branches studded with jewels. It was gifted to a brāhmaṇa.²⁷ The same text refers to Aśūnyaśayani; i.e. "non-empty bedstead." A fast and other rites on this day are said to wipe away the possibility of being a widow. She was required to take bath at a river, a tank or even in own house. Having offered pacificatory offerings to the gods and manes, she was required to construct a small raised square platform, on which Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī were established and worshipped.²⁸

The text of Skanda Purāṇa²⁹ ^{prescribes} the performance of the above vrata even after the four months of the rainy season, which ends in Kārtika. For the next four months, i.e., Mārgaśīrṣa, Pausa, Māgha and Phālguna, the images of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī are to be substituted by their aspects, respectively, Hari and Rukmiṇī; and even after four months, i.e., Caitra, Vaiśākha, Jyeshṭha and Āśāḍha with the images of Varāha and Bhūmi. The Vrata, thus, comes to be an year long ritual (sāmvatsarika). It is emphasized that the Vrata may be performed by a married man, a woman or even by a widow. Skanda Purāṇa refers to another Vrata in respect of the

goddess Maṅgalā Gaurī to be performed on the bright third of Caitra. After keeping awake for the whole night, the woman who observes the vrata is to feed twelve maidens next morning. She is also to worship a brāhmaṇa-couple and give a cow and bull as gift. The reward of performing this vow is said to be the gain of fortune, issues, beauty of form etc. A maiden who performs it is believed to get a good husband.³⁰ The text of Bhavishya Purāṇa prescribes the Goshpadatṛitīyā vrata to be observed on the third (or fourth) bright of Bhādrapada. On this occasion a woman, after bath, was required to massage the horns of the cows, hooves and the tail, with flour, curds and whole grain; they should be decorated with wreaths. The observer was required to abstain from eating salt and preparations in oil and also preparations not made with the help of fire. Arghya was to be offered to cow at the cow-stall or at the entrance of the city, where the cows step in. In the morning a golden replica of a cow-hoof was to be given to a brāhmaṇa.³¹

The text of Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa refers to Gaurīvrata, also known as Kātyāyanī-Vrata. It was to be performed in Mārgasīrsha. In this vrata, the goddess was to be invoked to arrive and stay

in a jar through the duration of the vow. Alternatively an idol of Durgā could be made from sand. It should have ten hands.³² The text of Bhavishya Purāṇa refers to a vrata on the third of Āśvina. It is termed Meghapālī tṛtīyā. The goddess is said to be Meghapālī. Men and women were required to join in the observation of the vow. An arghya offering of sprouted heat was to be offered to the goddess.³³ The same text enjoins that the goddess was to be honoured by respectable ladies. An image of the goddess Meghapālī was to be installed. It was to be covered with red cloth and decorated with scented powder.³⁴ Garuḍa Purāṇa refers to Dashtottara Pañcamī vrata, which was equivalent to Nāgapañcamī vrata, performed on fifth day of the bright half of Śrāvaṇa. It was observed both by men and women. On this occasion milk was offered to the serpents.³⁵ The text of Skanda Purāṇa refers to Rishipañcamī vrata. It was performed on the bright fifth of Bhādrapada. It is stated that this vrata was formerly observed by the wives of the sages. The speciality of the occasion is that on this day women who observe this vrata are to take only nivāra (rice growing wild, or without cultivation). The vrata is believed to bestow upon women house-hold happiness, love of the husband and son.³⁶

Purāṇas also lay down the co-operation of the wives in the performance of the religious rites. In the texts of the Vāyu Purāṇa³⁷ and Brahmanḍa Purāṇa³⁷, the act of lifting up earth ^{by Vāṇaka} out of ocean is equated with sacrifice. ^{It} is stated that on this occasion, his wife ^{of Vāṇaka} chhāyā also accompanied him. Both these texts allude a sacrifice performed in the naimishāraṇya. It is stated that in this sacrifice Tapa himself played the part of Yajamāna and his wife Ilā accompanied him.³⁸ Vāyu Purāṇa describes that, when Kaśyapa performed aśvamedha sacrifice in Pushkara, his wife Diti accompanied him.³⁹ Brahmanḍa Purāṇa relates that king Sagara performed his sacrificial bath alongwith his wife.⁴⁰ Matsya Purāṇa ordains that entrance into sacrificial hall along with one's wife is auspicious.⁴¹

From the above account it follows that on the whole ~~there~~ were no doubt some religious disabilities of women. But the ideal was that husband and wife are equal and necessary partners in divine worship. The references which we ^{have} taken into account in the present note leave no room for doubt that women have done greater service to religion than men by preserving the old tradition related to Hindu religion.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 195 ff.
2. Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 204.
3. Liṅga Purāṇa, II, 20. 2-3.
- 3A. Nārada Purāṇa, 14. 58.
4. Ibid, 14. 59-60.
5. Skanda Purāṇa, V, 4. 103, 22.
6. Kūrma Purāṇa, II, 23. 90.
7. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 30, 22.
8. Matsya Purāṇa, 16. 58.
9. Agni Purāṇa, 247, 30.
- 9A. Padma Purāṇa, Śṛiṣṭīkhaṇḍa, 29, 196-203.
10. Matsya Purāṇa, 61, 20.
11. Ibid, 67, 25-29.
12. Agni Purāṇa, 265, 3.
13. Ibid, 265, 4.
14. IBid, 302, 23.
15. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 75, 76-77.
16. Bhavishya Purāṇa, 28. 33-43.
17. Skanda Purāṇa, IV, 40, 89, VII, 1, 205, 76; VII. 1, 205, 78-79.
18. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 47. 40.
19. Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 37; VII. 144. 130.
20. Agni Purāṇa, 165. 6.

21. Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 38-40.
22. Agni Purāṇa, 165. 19.
23. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 95. 19.
24. Agni Purāṇa, 165, 20.
25. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa 9, 1-5.
26. Ibid, 9, 8. 12-16.
27. Ibid, 9, 9.
28. Ibid, 15, 4-13.
29. Skanda Purāṇa, II, 7, 10, 6 ff.
30. Ibid, IV, 49, 80-90.
31. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 19, 1 ff.
32. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 27, 122-126.
33. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa 17, 1-5.
34. Ibid, 17, 10.
35. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 128, 27-26.
36. Skanda Purāṇa, V, 1, 59, 33-39.
37. Vāyu Purāṇa, VI. 22-23,
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 1, 5, 19.
38. Vāyu Purāṇa, II, 6; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 1, 1.6.
39. Vāyu Purāṇa, 67. 57.
40. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 55. R
41. Matsya Purāṇa, 58. 21.

STATUS OF WIFE IN RELATION TO HUSBAND

It has been observed that, since Indo-Iranian times husband and wife were regarded as the joint owners of the house-hold. The Vedic word dampati etymologically means the joint owners of the house. The Avestā (Yashtā, 15, 4) describes the husband and the wife as nmāno-paiti and nmāno pathnī, showing thereby that they were equal partners and joint owners of the common household. There is no doubt that the supreme authority was clearly vested in the husband, the wife's position was one of honourable subordination. In the Vedic and epic society wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. The wife was considered to be the ornament of the house (Ṛgveda, 1.66.3). The home management was under her direct charge. Her views were to prevail there (Atharva Veda. XIV. -1.43). Husband and wife were considered to be the compliments of each other.

The wife had certain duties and obligations. She must be true to her husband in her marriage vows and lead the life of an ideal pativrata. She must try her utmost to promote her husband's happiness (Mahābhārata XII. 144.20). Neither the father nor the mother, neither a son nor a friend, can do for a woman what a husband will. ^{help that} The ~~these~~ can give is limited, the help the husband can offer is unlimited (Rāmāyaṇa, II. 27. 6; II. 40.3). Her real

happiness is centred in her husband (Rāmāyaṇa, II. 3730). If separated from her husband, she will desire neither pleasure nor prosperity nor heaven; she will prefer death to separation from him (Mahābhārata; III. 297.53).¹

As far the Purāṇa tradition, the ideal conduct of a house-wife is described in it in too open words. She was to be open-hearted to her husband, respectful to his brothers and sisters, devoted to his mother, affectionate towards her relations, considerate towards the servants, smiling even to her cowives, courteous to her husband's friends and hateful to his enemies. A wife who discharged all these duties, was the true pativrata. The sanctity of gods, sages and holy places is all centred in her. The world is sanctified by her existence, and there is no sin that would not evaporate by her mere presence.² In the Purāṇa-tradition, the relationship between the wife and the husband is particularly extolled. Thus the text of Brahma Purāṇa³ enjoins that a girl is not singularly praised. She is praised as the means to perform religious duty. The gift of a well ornamented chaste girl to a proper bride-groom is said to be equal to the gift of the earth with

all her mountains and forests. A Vedic sacrifice could not be accomplished without the wife, says Brahmā; from half of himself he is said to have created the wife.⁴

In the Purāṇic view wife was the best adviser in respect of house-management. Thus, the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa relates that once Nidāgha invited Ribhu at his residence to take meals. On this occasion Nidāgha consulted his wife and asked her to prepare whatever could be most delicate and sweet in the house ¹⁵ ~~of~~ feed the guest. The wife of Nidāgha, in obedience to her husband's commands, prepared sweet and savoury food, and set it before the brāhmaṇa.⁵ The text of Matsya Purāṇa depicts the account ^{of} the Kīṭa-couple and narrates that the wife of the Kīṭa took her meals after her husband had taken his meals and likewise she took her bath after her husband had taken his bath.⁶ In the same text it is enjoined that the wealth and life of the women are centred in their husbands. The husband is stated to be the very fortune of the woman.⁷ The texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa praise the pāṭivrata-dharma of the wives of prajāpati Atri.⁸ In both these texts there is reference to Māndhātā's wife Bindumatī. She was regarded as a matchless lady, because of

her beauty and devotion to her husband.⁹ The text of Matsya Purāṇa depicts the narrative of Sāvitrī. It is stated that she refused to take any thing from Yama except the life of her dead husband Satyavāna.¹⁰ It is emphasized that even Yama can not stand in the way of the women devoted to their husbands.¹¹ The text also emphasizes that the world exists due to the noble-souled women (devoted to their husbands).¹² Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that ~~she~~ ^{Wife of Dhritavarman} used to offer her daily prayers for the welfare of her husband.¹³

The text of Kūrma Purāṇa alludes to a number of good qualities of wife. It is related that, for a good wife the husband alone is guru.¹⁴ Padma Purāṇa enumerates the religious vows to be undertaken by women. It is narrated that a married woman should not undertake a vow that is not agreed to by her husband. Actually speaking there could not be any separate religious rite for a married woman from that of her husband.¹⁵ The text of Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that a husband must be respected and adored, may he be handsome or ugly.¹⁶ Similar view is expressed in the texts of Varāha Purāṇa¹⁷ and Brahmaparivarta Purāṇa.¹⁸

The text of Śiva Purāṇa alludes to four types of a pativrata woman. The Uttamā (the best) is the one whose mind does not go to any other man even in dream, but who sees only her husband. The madhyamā (of the middle type) who looks at other man as father, brother or son depending upon their age. The nikṛṣṭā (of low type) is one who does not commit adultery, thinking of her duty to her husband. The adhaṃmā (lowest) is one who desist from committing adultery due to fear of her husband or of her family.¹⁹

The text of Brahmavaivarta P^{ur}āṇa alludes^{to} the qualities of an excellent wife. She should get up early in the morning. She should leave her night garments. Then she should bow to her husband with joy and greet him with praise. After this, ~~she~~ should attend to the duties of her husband. After bath, she should wear washed clothes. Then she should worship her husband with a white flower²⁰ ~~It is added that after this~~. It is added that after this she should attend to the bath of her husband wash his feet and give him washed clothes. She should arrange a seat for him and ask^k him to sit there. She should apply sandal-paste to his fore head and the whole body. She should place a wreath in

his neck.²¹ With the mantras of Sāmaveda she should worship him. Then she should offer him a flower and sandal paste, place offerings on his feet; wave incense and a lamp with a wick; she should offer to him water made fragrant with ingredients, and mutter a stotra in front of him.²² A real pativrata is said to worship her husband seeing Viṣṇu in him; she partakes of food that is left over by him and drinks water touched by his feet.²³

The text of Skanda Purāṇa prescribes that a pativrata should not utter the name of her husband if she desires him long life.²⁴ Śiva Purāṇa enjoins that after her bath she should first see the face of her husband; never of any one else; or, she may think of her husband and look to the sun.²⁵ Skanda Purāṇa²⁶ and Śiva Purāṇa²⁷ enjoin that a pativrata should not discard her usual decoration and personal beautification if she desires the longevity of her husband. The beautification and other auspicious decoration include the use of turmeric-powder, saffron-tilaka, sindūra, collyrium, arrangement of hair, wearing of a bodice (kūrpāsa), putting on ornaments, wearing of bracelets and ear-rings. The two texts further narrate that a pativrata should not stand alone anywhere, nor

should take bath in a naked condition. She should not sit on a mortar, a pestle, a broom-stick. Or on a grinding stone, nor should she sit on a machine, or in the door-step; she should not travel anywhere.²⁸

According to Padma Purāṇa, only that wife deserves to be called pativrata who acts as a servant in work, like a prostitute at bed, mother at her husband's meals and a counsellor in his difficulties²⁹ ~~she should not~~. If she has many co-wives, she worships her husbands at the beds of her co-wives where he sleeps.³⁰ A pativrata is advised to hear with interest anything told by her husband; and when the husband is saying or narrating something, she should not start telling her own account.³¹ When invited by husband for sexual intercourse, she should eagerly consent. If the husband sings, she should be eager to hear it with joy. If the husband dances, or practises other arts, she should be eager to witness the performance. When the husband is showing something, she should be eager; she should never be near him with an excited or brooding mind. When the husband starts on a journey, she should wish him well and express auspicious words; she should not dissuade him, nor should she shed tears. When the husband

is away, she should sleep nowhere except by the side (in the same apartment) of her mother-in-law and father-in-law. Among other things to be done when the husband is away, she should never try to beautify her body, nor rub it clean when taking bath, should wear unattractive clothes, should not use flowers, wreaths and other ornamentation; she should not trim her nails, nor comb her hair, nor even wash her teeth; she should not eat betel-leaves.³²

The text of Garuḍa Purāṇa applies the epithet *proshita-bhartrikā* to a woman, whose husband has gone away on a journey. The restrictions for her are to keep herself as unattractive as possible. It is enjoined that, such a woman should discard for this period loud laughing and visiting others' houses.³³ Padma Purāṇa relates that mutually favourable attitude between the husband and the wife is the key for triple prosperity, and if the wife is favourable, what more is the purpose of heaven, and if the wife is unfavourable, where is the want of hell.³⁴

The texts of Padma Purāṇa and Skanda Purāṇa, both enjoin that a virtuous woman is, indeed, Śrī, the goddess of fortune. But a woman behaving in her

own way, without heeding to what the husband says is censured.³⁵ Brahṃavaivarta Purāṇa relates that a woman who remains faithful to her husband, and if he is the only one, is termed pativrata; with a second one, she is called kula; with a third one she becomes known as dharṣi; with a fourth one she is termed pumsali; with a fifth one she becomes a veśyā; with the sixth, seventh and eighth man, she becomes known as yugmī; and beyond that, she becomes mahāveśyā and is untouchable.³⁶

Purāṇas also lay down the duties of husband towards the wife. Thus, the text of Liṅga Purāṇa states that a woman should not be killed even if she is sinful and continues to be so; she should in fact be respected for all women should be believed to be basically pure, and born of Atri. An Ātreya is a woman in menstruation; and to kill her is to incur the sin of brahmahatyā.³⁷ The text of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa states that, the wife has to be protected; for, she has the husband himself born as an issue. If she is not protected, there is possibility of mixation of caste. Even an unchaste wife is to be protected in the same way as a characterless husband is to be respected.³⁸ Skanda Purāṇa relates that, one who does not behave properly

with his wife duly married to him, attains great sin, and after death (of both) he has to drink her blood in the hell.³⁹

The above evidence makes clear the responsibilities of a husband and the respect and compassion with which a woman was treated. In the text of Brahmapurāṇa wife is likened to Prakṛiti, the primeval female creative power. It is enjoined that if a person worships his wife with gifts of sandal, clothes and ornaments, Prakṛiti gets pleased with him, as Kṛishṇa gets pleased with the worship of a brāhmaṇa. Prakṛiti is dejected and turns away if a woman is disrespected.⁴⁰ Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that houses which are cursed by good women are bound to meet ruin. Hence good women are to be always respected on festive occasions and other honourable assemblies.⁴¹ Brahmapurāṇa relates that a person who deceitfully leaves his wife, who really loves him, is left away by the goddess of wealth.⁴² The same text relates that patnī is of three types, namely (1) Yajñapatnī, (2) guptapatnī and (3) dharmapatnī. The yajñapatnī is that who is regularly married, is righteous, steadfast in her adoration of her husband; but in essence, she is pious. The guptapatnī is that

one who is made agreeable through fear, love or gifts. She is not constant, in contrast with the first type. Thus, she is not nitya but naimittika, which means that she ^{is} made on purpose and is a kept; she is not accepted by the Vedic texts. The dharmapatnī is calm by nature and praiseworthy, being a pativrata. The yajñapatni keeps company at religious rites; hence she is termed puṇyavratā, while the dharmapatnī is termed pativrata, being a conjugal partner, always pleasing of speech, knowing various arts, soft in body and giving sexual happiness. It is laid down that, if a person wants to go away for penance, he can do so only if the third type of wife gets a son; otherwise his penance is sure to be set at naught.⁴³

The Purāṇa texts in a number their narratives extol the pativrata. We start with Padma Purāṇa. It is narrated that there was a brāhmaṇa woman named Śaivyā in Madhyadesā. Her husband was a leper. Śaivyā was a chaste woman and loved to serve her husband and obey him. Once her husband desired to a sexual union with a particular prostitute. Śaivyā accepted to fulfil his desire and went to the abode of the prostitute and requested for permission to serve her. The prostitute accepted

her as a servant; and the latter cleaned her house and its surroundings. As three days thus elapsed, the prostitute asked her why she was serving her. The pativrata communicated her husband's desire to her. Seeing her love for her husband, the prostitute consented and asked her to bring her husband at night. As she carried her husband on her back in the dark, the latter's body struck a sharp pole on which the sage Māṇḍavya was set by the king. The sage cursed the leper, though the latter accidentally touched him, to be turned into ashes as soon as the Sun rose in the morning. The pativrata heard the curse, and by her ~~processes~~^{prayers} she stopped the Sun from rising. The gods approached Brahmā and told him what had happened. Brahmā brought about a reconciliation, and the leper and his pativrata wife went to heaven.⁴⁴ The same narrative is available in the text of Garuḍa Purāṇa, which further adds that the name of the brāhmaṇa was Kauśika, who was staying at Pratiśṭhāna.⁴⁵ The texts of Skanda Purāṇa and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa relate the story of the pativrata, who is said to be the wife of one Virasārman, staying at Hāṭakesvara. Her name is said to have been Dīrghikā and she is said to have been of abnormal size. None married her. Ultimately she was married to a leper.⁴⁶

Varāha Purāṇa relates another interesting story of a pativrata woman. According to the narrative king Mithi, son of Nimi had a chaste wife named Rūpavatī. Once the king told her to clean various creepers and groves of thorns which he cut. It was a summer day and the queen was thirsty. There was no water nearby and the queen fainted. But as she fainted she looked at the Sun, with the result that the latter fell on the ground. He was pleased with the pativrata and gave her a water-jar. To the king also he offered a pair of sandal and an umbrella decorated with many ornaments. The sun-god told the king that he should honour the pativrata woman. It is narrated that, since then even the god of death Yama, who is the son of the sun-god respects chaste women.⁴⁷ According to another story available in the text of Skanda Purāṇa, king Indrasena had a chaste wife. Her name was Sunandā. Once the king thought of testing her love for himself. So, when away from the capital, he sent a messenger to his wife informing her that her husband, the king (himself) died in the battle. The shock was so great for the pativrata that she died instantaneously. The same text further states that a woman who creates quarrel between a husband and

wife is said to become widow in her young age for twenty one births.⁴⁸

The texts of Matsya Purāṇa⁴⁹ and Padma Purāṇa⁵⁰ refer to suvāsini women, who played an important part on the occasion of festivals. They are to be accompanied with their husbands. Matsya Purāṇa relates that on festive occasion in respect of goddess Lalitā, the suvāsini are to be worshipped with the accompaniment of songs and instrumental music. They should be offered red clothes and red flowers and sindūra should be applied to them on their heads. According to Padma Purāṇa on festive occasions suvāsini should be invited along with their husbands. The women invitees on such occasions were called suvāsini. Various kinds of drink were offered to them, including grape-juice mixed with bits of jaggery and wine. They were also given collyrium for applying it to their eyes, betelnuts and sindūra to be applied at the parting of the hair on the head.

We may conclude our note with the observation that the foremost duty of the wife was to honour and serve the husband. It was husband's duty to provide residence and maintenance for the wife.

There is no doubt that, as in the Mahābhārata in Purāṇas also hyperbolic descriptions of the power of the pativrata occur at every step. In these texts, names of several pativrata and the following verses dilate upon the rules of conduct for virtuous and chaste wives. The story of Sāvitrī illustrates the power of a pativrata, who wrung back even from Yama, the dread god of Death, the life of her husband.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 94 ff.
2. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, 35. 119, 37, see also Bālarāmayāṇa, IV. 44; Abhyūjñāsakuntalam, IV. 19.
3. Brahma Purāṇa, 165. 9-11.
4. Ibid, 161, 33-35.
5. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, II. 15.
6. Matsya Purāṇa, 20-32.
7. Ibid, 154. 166.
8. Vāyu Purāṇa, 70. 67.
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa III, 8.74.
9. Vāyu Purāṇa. 88. 71-72.
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa III. 63. 7.
10. Matsya Purāṇa, 208. 16.
11. Ibid, 208. 3.
12. Ibid, 215. 21-22.
13. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV, 7. 52.
14. Kūrma Purāṇa, II, 12. 48.
15. Padma Purāṇa, Sṛisṭīkhaṇḍa 29, 74-75.
16. Skanda Purāṇa VII, 1. 166. 64-65.
17. Varāha Purāṇa, 209. 4 ff.
18. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa II. 57, 17-19 ff.

19. Śiva Purāṇa II, 55. 74-77.
20. [~]Brahma Yaivarta Purāṇa. 83, 130-131.
21. Ibid, 83, 132-133.
22. Ibid, 83. 136-142.
23. Ibid, 57, 20.
24. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2. 7.18.
25. Śiva Purāṇa, II, 54. 33.
26. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 27...28-29.
27. Śiva Purāṇa, II. 54. 34-35.
28. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2. 7
Śiva Purāṇa, II. 54. 37-38.
29. Padma Purāṇa, Sṛiṣṭikhaṇḍa, 47, 56
30. Ibid
31. Ibid, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 234, 49.
32. Ibid, Uttrakhaṇḍa, 234, 50-52, 59, 62, 64-66 ff
33. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 95, 29-30.
34. Padma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 223, 36-37.
35. Ibid, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 229, 38-41,
Skanda Purāṇa, II, 1, 26. 82-83.
36. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Prakṛitikhāṇḍa, 31, 4-5.
37. Liṅga Purāṇa, 1, 78. 17-18.
38. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 59, 35-36, 59.
39. Skanda Purāṇa, V. 3. 121, 4-6.
40. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, 1, 30. 15-16.
41. Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 57-58.
42. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II. 114, 56.

43. Ibid, II, 114. 25-32.
44. Padma Purāṇa, Sṛishtikhaṇḍa, 48. 7-8.
45. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1. 142. 19-29.
46. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 135, 3-90,
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 16. 14-85.
47. Varāha Purāṇa, 208. 26-90.
48. Skanda Purāṇa, VII, 3, 21, 2-8; III, 19, 22.
49. Matsya Purāṇa, 61, 20.
50. Padma Purāṇa, Sṛishtikhaṇḍa, 29, 196-203.

THE PROSTITUTES

It has been observed that prostitution has existed from the dawn of history in all the countries and in the absence of statistics it is difficult to say whether it flourished more in one country than in another or whether it existed to a greater or lesser extent in ancient days as compared with modern times. Attention has been drawn to the age of Rigveda when there were women who were common to several men, i.e., who were courtezans or prostitutes. The text of Rigveda contains a number of instances to this effect. At one place there is allusion to the bright Maruts who are said to have become associated with the young lightning, in the same way as men become associated with a young courtesan (I. 167.4). At another place reference is made to a woman who gives birth in secret to a child and leaves it aside (II. 29.1). In a number of contexts jāra (paramour or secret lover) is spoken of (e.g. I, 66. 4; I, 117. 18; 134, 3). Quite a good number of evidences are available in the post Vedic texts. Gautama Dharmasūtra enjoins that for killing a woman who is a brāhmaṇī only by birth and who subsists by harlotry no prāyascitta is necessary but eight handful of corns may be gifted (XII. 27). Manusmṛiti forbids a brāhmaṇa from taking food offered by harlots. It also ordains that the

king should punish deceitful harlots (IV. 209; IV. 219; IX. 259). In the Mahābhārata courtezans are an established institution. It is narrated that a veśyā waited upon Dhṛitarāshṭra when Gāndharī was pregnant (Ādiparva, 115. 39). Yudhisṭhira sends greetings to the Veśyās of the Kauravas (udyogaparva, 30. 38). Courtezans are described as going out to welcome Krishna when he came on a mission of peace to the Kaurava court (udyogaparva, 86. 15). Yājñavalky-smṛiti divides concubines into two sorts, namely, avaruddhā (one who is kept in the house itself and forbidden to have intercourse with any other male) and bhujishyā (concubine who is not kept in the house, but elsewhere and is in the special keeping of a person). It also prescribes a fine of fifty paṇas against another person having intercourse with them (II, 290).

Nārada-Smṛiti enjoins that intercourse is permitted with wanton women (svairiṇī) who are not brāhmaṇa by caste, with a prostitute, a female slave, or a female not restricted by his master, if these belong to a caste lower than oneself; but it is forbidden with women of upper caste. But when these very women are the kept mistresses (of a person) intercourse with them by a stranger is as much a crime as intercourse with another's wife (strīpūṇṣa, 78-79).

Concubines being recognized by society, the Smṛitis provided for their maintenance. During the life time of a person keeping a concubine, the ^{latter} later has no legal right to proceed against the former. Nārada and Kātyāyana lay down that even when the property of a deceased person escheats to the king for want of heirs (except in the case of a deceased person being a brāhmaṇa) the king has first to provide for the maintenance of the concubines of the deceased of his slaves and for his śrāddha (dāyabhāga 52). The Mitāksharā says that the concubines here referred to are those called avaruddhā (and not bhujishyā) and that even the kept mistresses of a deceased brāhmaṇa are entitled to maintenance from his property.¹

As far the Purāṇas, we may start with the text of Padma Purāṇa, which depicts an interesting story about the origin of the institution of courtesan. According to this story when the wives of gods and demons were ravished by the members of the other side they were asked to follow at the royal palace, the life of prostitutes (vīśyadharmēṇa vartadhvam adhunā nr̥pamandire). They were asked to go and stay as prostitutes at temples (devakuleshu ca). They are also advised not to have love for one

particular person, if he is poor, because with them the main purpose should be the money, irrespective of the person being handsome or deformed (surupo vā virupo vā dravyameva prayojanam). They are advised not to be extremely jealous, nor should they be of crooked thought. They are asked to accept any one who gives the "fees" (sulka). They are also asked to bestow various gifts on brāhmaṇas on auspicious days. When on a Sunday falls the constellation Hasta, Pushya or Punarvasu, they should have auspicious bath and worship the god of love. Each one should invite a brāhmaṇa on this day and offer him measureful of rice, along with a jar full of clarified butter; and should give him sexual pleasure, thinking him to be Kāma, the god of love (ratyartham kamadeyo'yaṁ iti citte' vadhā^avyet). She should give to him, as gift, the idols of Kāma and Rati, placed on a jar filled with jaggery, in a copper-plate covered with a silken cloth and tied with golden thread. Along with it she should give a vessel of bell-metal and sugar-cane (kamadevam sapatnīkām guḍakumbhopari shitam/tāmrapatre samāropya hemanetrapaṭāvṛitam/sukāṁsyabhājanopetamikshudaṇḍa-sam¹invitam//).²

The text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa enjoins that, a prostitute is that woman who has sexual

relations with four men (nārī veśyā pratiñneyā catuspurushagāminī)³. According to Padma Purāṇa even though a prostitute has free sexual life, she has her own norm of fidelity and observes faithfulness to one husband (pātivratya). She is said to be a pativratā, if she has not have sexual relations with any other person, while she stays with one (yadadhīnā yadāveśyā tadā nānyena saṅgatā/pativrateti vijñeyā tasmāttām pratipālaya)⁴.

A passage of Bhavishya Purāṇa reveals the importance of a prostitute at festivals. The passage relates that on the occasion of Dīpavālī, after the banishment of Alakshamī, in the morning of the new-moon-day a prostitute goes from house to house uttering the auspicious words, heralding the advent of the goddess of glory, Lakshmī. She is accompanied by other damsels, singing and merry-making (Veśyāvilāsiniśārdham svastimaṅgalakāriṇī/grihādgrīham brajantī pādābhyāṅapradāyini)⁵.

In Brahmaparivarta Purāṇa, sight of a prostitute while going on an errand is said to be an auspicious sign; and actually among such auspicious things arranged, a prostitute is also included. Akrūra is said to have been made to see a prostitute, a

wreath of flower, a flag, milk and curds (veśyām ca pushpamālām ca patākām dadhidarsanam). Nanda welcomed him placing a prostitute in front (kṛitvā veśyām purah-sarīm). It is said that, if one sees a prostitute in dream he is sure to gain wealth (veśyām drishtvā śriyam-āpnuyāt). Among good omens is included the sight of a deer, prostitute, a drone, camphor, and yellow garment (puṁscalī-daisāne puṇyam).⁶

In Bhavishya Purāṇa, a prostitute is said to be a must at the ritual of tying the sared protective cord in the case of a king; and with clay from the gate of a prostitute's house his waist is purified (veśyājanena sahitaḥ maṅgalaśabdaiḥ sulasitaścinhaiḥ/rakshābandhaḥ kāryaḥ śāntidhvaninā narendrasya//veśyādvārṇṛidā rājñḥ kaṭisaucam vidhīyate).⁷

The text of Padma Purāṇa makes special note of temple-girls. There is indication of such girls dedicated to Śiva-līṅga. It is stated that a person who kills a maiden dedicated to a līṅga goes to hell. It is also enjoined that one may have sex with one's own mother, if one is infatuated; but he should not have sex with a servant-girl of Śiva (dāsīm hatvā tu līṅgasya narakān na nivartate/kāmarto

mātaram gacchet na gacchechivacetikām/śivadāsīm
tato gatvā śivasvaharaṇe tatah//).⁸

The text of Brahmaivaivarta Purāṇa relates that a person in whose house there is no mother, nor wife nor a prostitute should go to the forest (mātā yasya grihe nāsti bhāryā ca puṁscalī tathā/aranyam tena gantavyamaranyādduḥkhadam griham//). There is also reference to svarveśyā or divine prostitute. She was not to be insulted. It is narrated that, once Brahmā refused sexual gratification to svarveśyā, Mohinī. She in return cursed him.⁹

Before we conclude our note on the present topic, it would be worthwhile to remark in the light of the observation made by Altekar that, when temples of Hindu gods came to be built and endowed on a magnificent scale, some people began to feel in course of time that there should be singing girls attached to shrines to play music on the occasion of different services and worships of the day. The custom of the association of dancing girls with temples is unknown to Jātaka literature. It is not mentioned by ^{Greek} ~~Greek~~ writers; the Arthasastra, which describes in detail the life and duties of dancing girls, is silent about it. The custom, however,

had come into vogue by about the 3rd. Century A.D., for Kālidāsa refers to dancing girls of Ujjayinī at the time of evening worship (Meghadūta, 1, 35). Several Purāṇas also recommend that arrangements should be made to enlist the services of singing girls to provide vocal and instrumental music at the time of divine services. These singing girls were usually prostitutes. Some of the Purāṇas have gone to the extent of recommending the purchase of beautiful girls for their dedication to temples. Thus the text of Padma Purāṇa states—"krītā devāya dātavyā dhīreṇaklishtakarmanā/kalpakālam bhavetsargo nṛipo vāsau mahādhanī //" (srisṭikhaṇḍa, 52. 97). The text of Bhavishya Purāṇa goes to the extent of saying that the best way to win Sūryaloka is to dedicate a bevy of prostitutes to a solar temple (veśyākadambakam yastu dadyātsūryāya bhaktitah/sa gacchetparamam sthānam yatra tishṭhati bhānumāna//".¹⁰

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Padma Purāṇa, Śrishtikhaṇḍa, 23, 83 ff.
3. Brahmapurāṇa, Śrīkṛishṇajanmakhaṇḍa, 75. 64.
4. Ibid, pātālakhaṇḍa, 106, 78-79.
5. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 104. 31.
6. Brahmapurāṇa, Śrīkṛishṇajanmakhaṇḍa, 70. 25; 76. 19; 23. 41.
7. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 137. 18;
see also Agni Purāṇa, 218. 16.
8. Padma Purāṇa, Śrishtikhaṇḍa, 23. 129; 56. 94.
9. Brahmapurāṇa, Śrīkṛishṇajanmakhaṇḍa. 84.10.32.11 ff.
10. Bhavishya Purāṇa, 1, 93. 67; Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 182-183.

THE PURDA-SYSTEM

It has been rightly observed that the available evidence on the point, whether Purdā system was prevalent in ancient India or not is of dubious nature, and can be manipulated to support either of the view. As in Indo-Iranian times, in the Vedic age too, women could move quite freely in society. The Vedic texts reveal that girls were educated along with boys; love marriages would take place not infrequently; youths could approach their sweethearts to win their love, both would often go together to see shows and sports. All this would not have been possible if the Purdā system had been observed in society by maidens. Attention has been drawn to Ṛgveda 1. 167. 3, which does not contain any reference to Purdā system. According to this hymn the laddle, now being dipped into the gheepot and then being taken out and brought forward to pour its contents into the sacrificial fire, is compared in this hymn to a lady, now remaining in privacy in her house, and then coming out in public to attend a meeting. During the epic period some kind of Purdā was observed in certain royal families. At the time when Sītā set out with her husband for the forest through the public thoroughfares of Ayodhyā, a regret is expressed in Rāmāyaṇa that a lady who had so far not been

seen even by the spirits of the sky should now become the object of public gaze (II. 33, 8). A similar observation occurs in the Mahābhārata also at the time of Dhṛitarāṣṭra's departure of forest' (XV. 16.13). The Rāmāyaṇa further observes that there is no objection if women come out in public on the occasions of marriages, svyaṁvaras; sacrifices and public calamities (VI. 116.28). These references reveal that in normal life ladies were expected to remain in Purdā. It has been noticed that the above references are interpolations of a later age. The other data of the epic in the epics themselves go against the prevalence of Purdā. When Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā proceed to Citrakūṭa to induce Rāma to return to Ayodhyā, they move in public without any veil. Sītā herself feels no embarrassment of a Purdā lady, when she is going out through the streets of Ayodhyā. Draupadī's public appearance in gambling hall presupposes an entire absence of the Purdā. Neither Kuntī nor Gāndhārī is seen observing it.¹

Kane has traced out certain references which are of special note in this regard. Thus the text of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (12.11) says

that the daughter-in-law is abashed in the presence of father-in-law and goes away concealing away from him. According to Kane, this indicates that there was some restraint for younger women when they were in the presence of elders. He further quotes Pāṇini. The celebrated grammarian (Ashtādhyāyī, Sūtra, III. 2.35) explains the formation of 'asūryampasyā' (who do not see the Sun) applied to 'rājadārāḥ' (queens). It is pointed out that, the reference only shows that the royal ladies did not leave the precincts of the palace and come under public gaze. In Sabhāparva (69.9) Draupadī says that, since she was seen at her ^{Y.}svamvara by the kings, she was never seen again by them till she was brought to the assembly hall when Yudhishtira gambled and lost everything. It is commented that, the ladies, particularly high born ladies did not appear in public except on certain occasions; that it does not follow that they were always in veil. Kane has also illustrated references from classical Sanskrit texts. Some of them may be mentioned. In Harshacarita (IV) Rājyashrī, whom the intended bride-groom Grahavarman came to see before marriage, is described as having her face covered with a fine red cloth. In the Kādambari Patralekhā has been described as covering her face with

a veil of red cloth. In Abhijñānaśakuntalam when Sakuntalā is taken to the court of Dushyanta she is described as wearing a veil (V. 13).²

It is contended that, by about 300 A.D. some royal families were beginning to think it desirable that their ladies should be seen only by the select few; when moving in public they should put on a veil. The royal example was being imitated by a few families in higher and fashionable society. Thus in the Mṛichchhakatika the courtesan was offered a veil when she was raised to the status of a respectable lady at the end of the drama. However, this view was shared by a small section of society. It appeared altogether irrational to women in general, who began to oppose it with all their might. From the Lalitavistara we learn that when Gopā, the bride-elect of the Buddha, was betrothed to him, she ^{was} advised to wear a veil. She refused to follow the course observing that the pure in thought require no such artificial protection (Canto XVI). This instance shows that the Purdā system was receiving rational opposition from spirited ladies. It resulted in the system not becoming popular for several centuries. It may have been

prevailing in a few royal families, whose number was very small. Sculptures and paintings of the first millennium of the Christian era do not at all disclose any Veils over ladies' face. The sculptures of Sanchi show that the women of the 2nd century B.C. could see a procession from the balconies of their houses without covering their faces with veils (Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, plate 1). Both at Sanchi and Ajanta we come across mixed throngs of men and women moving together in streets (Yazdani, Ajanta, part II, plate XXIV) and participating in worship at public temples (Altekar, ibid, plate II); women are however not to be seen any veils. It has been rightly pointed out that, to show a veil round the face may be difficult for a sculptor, but not for a painter. If therefore we see even married women moving in public without Purdā in Ajanta painting, the conclusion is irresistible that it was hardly much in vogue even in the higher and fashionable sections of society. It is contended that, the evidence of sculptures and paintings is corroborated by the data of Dharmasāstra and classical Sanskrit literature. Several Smṛitis like those of Manu and Yājñavalkya lay down detailed rules about

the life of women, but they nowhere lay down that women were not to go out except when properly veiled. It has also been observed that in most of the Sanskrit dramas we do not find any trace of Purdā system. In the first Act of Abhiññāna-sakuntalam the maidens do not cover their faces with veils, even when they see and converse with Dushyanta. In the fifth Act, the heroine no doubt appears with a veil, but that is because she had donned it as a protection against the dust and weather during her journey. It was not doffed by her for some time owing to her sense of bashfulness and embarrassment at her first public appearance before her husband. Her veil in the fifth act therefore does not prove the existence of Purdā system. We learn from Yuan Chuang that Rājyashrī, the widowed sister of Harsha, used to come out without a veil in her brother's court. Abu Zaid, an Arabian traveller of the early 10th century has noted that in most of the courts in India queens appeared in public without any veils. It is therefore clear that the Purdā was confined to a very small section of the ruling classes down to the 10th century A.D.³

Altekar further observes that, although in Hindu society as a whole there was nothing like the modern Purdā system, there were certain restrictions on the movement of women. They could go out to visit their friends and relations, but decorum required that they should not stay at their houses for the night or when their business was over. They were to observe a certain amount of reserve in the presence of strangers. They could speak with merchants and doctors and transact the necessary business, but ~~they~~^{they} were to be circumspect while dealing with unknown persons (na parapurushamabhibhāsheta anyatra vaṇikpravrajitavaidyebhyaḥ, Sankha in Aparārka on Yājñavalkya-smṛiti, 1.83). IN the same connection it is pointed out by Altekar that, though there was no Purdā system, women who felt themselves to be in a rather helpless condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case of widows and maidens without proper guardians, and of married women, whose husbands had gone out on a journey (kṛīḍam sarīrasaṃskāram samājotsvadarsanam /hāsyam paragṛiḥe yānam tyajetproshitabhartrikā// Yājñavalkya Smṛiti, 1.84). In support of this Smṛiti injunction evidence of Svapnavāsavadattam of Bhāsa has been cited; wherein queen Padmāvatī

observes that it was natural for Tāpasī to avoid strangers, because her husband was out on a journey. (proshitabhartṛikā parapurushadarsānam pariharatyā-ryā, Act VI).⁴

Altekar takes into account the evidence of Kathāsaritsāgara, written towards the end of the eleventh century A.D. He observes that there are hardly any traces of the Purdā in this text. In the story of Arthalobha (III. 286) there is a reference to a lady participating in mercantile business. Polygamous kings occasionally attempted to introduce some seclusion in their harems, but they were strongly and successfully opposed by their queens. In this connection the story of Ratnaprabhā has been quoted. She is shown protesting to her husband against his view that even his own friends should not enter her apartments. She points out that the strict seclusion of women is a folly produced by jealousy, it is of no use whatsoever; ^{women} ~~women~~ of good character are guarded by their own virtue and nothing else.⁵

It has been observed that, the general adoption of the Purdā system by the ruling and aristocratic families of Hindu community is

subsequent to the Muslim rule. It was accepted by Hindu society partly in imitation of the manners of the conquerors, and partly as an additional protection of the women folk. IN the Muslim ruling families the Purdā was so strict that a message had to pass through three intermediaries before it could reach the harem (JOurnal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1935, page 246). The Hindu chiefs and nobles followed the example of their overlords in their own harems. This is supposed to have happened almost universally in northern India, where Muslim rule and culture were in ascendancy for a long time. In the Deccan, the Muslim rule was artificial, and so the Purdā system got no footing in the Hindu society ~~their~~^{there}. It was, however, introduced by the Marāṭhā rulers with a desire to render themselves as respectable as the Muslim kings whom they had supplanted. It is also noticed that there were further causes to fecilitate the general adoption of the custom at about 1200 A.D. As a rule Hindu women at this time were illiterate and inexperienced. The times were unsettled, there was a general feeling of insecurity and Hindu life and honour did not count for much in the eyes of the conquerors. The Purdā afforded some additional protection

to beautiful women while out on journey from the covetuous eyes of an unscrupulous soldiery. It was therefore welcomed by Hindu women. They did not protest against it as Ratnaprabhā, a heroine in Kathāsaritsāgara, had done before.⁶

We now proceed to evaluate the evidence of Purāṇa tradition on the present issue. We start with a passage of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, occurring in Kṛishṇa-legend. It relates that, when Kṛishṇa came to know that the Kālayavana was planning to invade Dwārakā, he reflected that if the Yādavas encountered the Yavana, they would be so much weakened by the conflict, that they would then be overcome by the king of Magadha, that their force was much reduced by the war with Magadha; whilst that of Kālayavana was unbroken; and that the enemy might be therefore victorious. Thus the Yādavas were exposed to a double danger. He therefore resolved to construct a citadel for the Yadu tribe, that should not be easily taken. In the proposed citadel there was provision for the employment even of women to fight and resist the yavana.⁷ The passage thus reveals free movement of the women and their fighting capacity, which was not possible in a secluded

way of living. In the same legend there is reference to Kansa's planning to kill Kṛishṇa and Balarāma in a boxing combat by the state wrestlers Cāṇūra and Muṣṭhika. On the wrestling ground there were open and separate platforms for the different categories of the spectators. Princes, ministers and courtiers occupied the royal seats. Near the centre of the circle judges of games were stationed, whilst he himself sat apart close by upon a lofty throne. For the ladies of the palace, for the courtezans and for the wives of the citizens there were separate platforms. Among the wives of the citizens there is reference to Devakī who appeared, mourning for her son, whose lovely face she longed to behold even in the hours of his destruction. Thus, the legend has clear indication of the attendance of the women in public gathering.^{7A}

~~These~~ are a number of Purāṇa-passages revealing the free and frequent movements of the maidens on the city-roads and their presence in social and ceremonial gatherings. In the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, there is reference to the hermitage of Jamadagni converted into city consequent upon the divine prowess of the kāmadhenu.

About the multitude of palaces situated in the inner side of the city, it is narrated that their hemispherical domes were touching the sky appearing white in the full moon; the maidens were seen moving in the city inconveniently due to the weight of their hips (and not due to any cloak or covering on their body restricting their movements). In this connection the text also refers to the roads of the said city; king Kārtavīrya of the Haihaya dynasty was passing on these roads on the occasion of his visit to Jamadagni; in his honour the city maidens were showering flowers on him; they were however seated in their own mansions.⁸ The description has no indication to any artificial seclusion from public gathering. The respected ladies of aristocratic families had their own sense of decorum and propriety. It was deemed proper that they should play their part while sitting in their chambers without coming in the open field surcharged with muddled assemblage of the common folk.

The text of Matsya Purāṇa refers to king Nimi, who was playing at dice along with the maidens of the inner apartment. It is related that sage Vasishṭha was also present there on

that occasion.⁹ When king Brahmādatta was coming outside along with his ministers, his wife was also there.¹⁰ The wife of Bāṇasura was openly holding discussion on religious observances with sage Nārada.¹¹ The daughter of Śukrācārya, even though a grown ^{up} ~~by~~ lady was attending upon Kacha, the favourite disciple of her father and was also receiving training from him in different branches of fine art.¹² In another context, the same text describes that on the occasion when Kṛishṇa attended to the recitation of Purāṇa narratives, his wives were also present there along with the Kuru and Vrishṇi kings.¹³

In the chapter on the position of girls, we have already made to the enlightened maidens who had cultivated proficiency in different branches of knowledge, metaphysical as well as practical. This could not have been possible in seclusion and away from the fore of the outwardly environment. Some instances may again be given considering their relevance in the context of the present note. Thus, the text of Matsya Purāṇa relates that, when Pārvatī was observing penances the sages approached her and began to put a number

of queries to her.¹⁴ In the texts of Viṣṇu, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa, reference is made to Menā and Dhāriṇī. They are said to have been acquainted with theological truth (brahmavādinī); were addicted to religious meditation and accomplished in perfect wisdom.¹⁵ Bhuvanā in the texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa is styled as 'brahmavādinī.' She had accomplished yogic practices; she had travelled throughout the world. (~~Ins 81-82~~). Aparṇā, Ekaparṇā and Ekapātālā are referred to in the texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa and are styled as 'brahmavādinī' and (brahmacāriṇī).¹⁶ Reference to Sannati is made in the text of Matsya Purāṇa; she is styled as 'brahmavādinī' because of her being occupied with her father's work.¹⁷ Śatarūpa happens to be a well-known maiden of Purāṇa tradition. In the text of Matsya Purāṇa she is styled as 'brahmavādinī'.^{17A} Vedavati, the daughter of king Kuśadhvaja figures prominently in the Purāṇa texts especially in the text of Devībhagavata; she was considered to be versed in the Vedic lore from her very birth; she practised penances at Pushkara and Gandhamādana mountain; ultimately she consummated her body by means of Yogic practices.¹⁸ Maitreyī, Sulabhā and Śaṇḍilī, according to the text of Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa had attained commendable

success in Yoga.¹⁹ Story of Pīvarī is narrated in the text of Matsya Purāṇa; she was a mind-born daughter of the manes; she was well versed in the knowledge of Yoga; she was renowned for practising severe penances.²⁰

Above we have noted the observation of Altekar that, though there was no Purdā system, women who felt themselves to be in a rather helpless condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case of widows and maidens without proper guardian, and of married women whose husbands had gone out on a journey. We are citing here Purāṇic evidence in support of this observation. We have already taken into account the evidence in the chapters on status of wife in relation to Husband and position of Widow. Considering its relevance in the present context, we are citing the Purāṇa-passages again. Thus, the text of Garuḍa Purāṇa applies the epithet proshita-bhartrikā to a woman whose husband has gone away on a journey. The restrictions for such a woman are to keep herself as unattractive as possible; she should discard for this period loud laughing and visiting others, houses.²¹ The text of Padma enjoins that a woman, whose husband is away should

sleep nowhere except by the side of her mother-in-law and father-in-law; she should never try to beautify her body, ^{not. rule} ~~be~~-^{rule} it clean; she should not ^{rule} ~~rule~~ it clean when taking bath; she should wear unattractive clothes; she should not use flowers, wreaths and other ornamentations.²² In its chapter on strīdharmā, the text of Brihaddharma Purāṇa, imposes a number of restraints on a widow; she should live a highly restricted life in seclusion; she should abstain from wearing red clothes, sleeping on bedsteads and indulging all other kinds of luxury.^{22A}

It is, however, noteworthy that the Purāṇa tradition is not at ^{all} ~~at~~ silent about the prevalence of Purdā system. There are at least three passages in text of Matsya Purāṇa which allude to its prevalence. It is stated that the women in the house of king Yayāti could not be seen even by Soma, Indra, Vāyu, Varuṇa and Yama.²³ Purāṇic account may be compared with 'asūryampasyā rājadāraḥ*' occurring in the Ashtādhyāyī of Pāṇini, noted above. It may be possible to argue ^{that} ~~the~~ the present Purāṇa-passage as well other two to be illustrated subsequently are interpolations of a later age, when the Purdā system was introduced

in a few royal families. For other passages of the text as detailed above go against the prevalence of Purdā. In connection with the wife of Himavāna, the sovereign of the mountains, it is related that when came to before Nārada and offered her obeisance to the sage she had covered her face.²⁴ In connection with the Saravana ~~fort~~ ^{forest} where Śiva and Pārvatī were staying an enclosure of ten Yojanas had been constructed so that a male stranger may not reach there.²⁵ It has to be noted that these passages occur in a Purāṇa, which was subjected to omissions and commissions many a time, and as Hazra illustrates in his table ^{shows} some of these passages may be dated during the period after the advent of the Muslims, around 1250 A.D.²⁶

u We may conclude our note with the remark that generally speaking "Purāṇic evidence shares" in common with external evidence on the point. We can not be sure about the extent of its prevalence in the common life. The system was known. But it was not wide-spread. Even in royal families it did not find general acceptance. It gained a powerful impetus with the advent of Muslim rule owing ^{to} the culture and example of the conquerors.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 166 ff.
2. P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, pp. 597-598.
3. Altekar, *ibid*, p. 173.
4. *Ibid*.
5. *Ibid*, p. 174.
6. *Ibid*, p. 175.
7. tasmaddurgam karishyāmi Yadūnāmaridurjayam/
striyo'piyatra yudhyeyuḥ kim punarvrishṇipun-
gavāḥ//Vishṇu Purāṇa V. 23.11.
- 7A. antaḥpurāṇām mañcāsca tatha'nye parikalpitāḥ/
anye ca vāramukhyanamanye nagarayoshitām//
ibid V. 20.27.
8. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 27.25. ff. ~~dyutamadyat~~
9. nimirnām saha sribhiḥ purā ~~dyutamadyat~~ ~~dyutamadyata~~
tantrāntare'bhyajagāma Vasishṭho brahmasam-
bhavaḥ//Matsya Purāṇa, 61. 32.
10. *Ibid*, 21, 27.
11. *Ibid*, 187, 26.
12. *Ibid*, 25, 27.
13. *Ibid*, 69, 10-11.
14. *Ibid*, 154, 153 ff.

15. Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1, 10.19; Vāyu Purāṇa, 30, 28-29; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 13.30.
16. Vāyu Purāṇa, 66.27; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 2, 88.
17. Matsya Purāṇa, 20.27.
- 17A. Ibid, 4, 24.
18. Devībhagāvatā, Skandha IX. Chapter 16.
19. Vishṇu Purāṇa, Chapter 98.
20. Matsya Purāṇa, 15, 5-6.
21. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 95, 29-30.
22. Padma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 234, 50-52, 59, 62, 64-66 ff.
- 22A. Bṛīhaddharma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, Chapter 8
23. Matsya Purāṇa, 31. 12.
24. Vavande gūḍhavadanā pāṇipadmakṛitāñjaliḥ, ibid. 154, 134.
25. Ibid, 11. 46.
26. R.C. Hazra, Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, pp. 176-177.

POSITION OF MOTHER AND DIVINE MOTHERS

It has been contended that motherhood has been the cherished ideal of every Hindu women. The birth of a son immediately heightens her status. In this connection example of Kisā Gautamī has been cited. She was not well treated for some time after her marriage. But, the things changed for better the moment a son was born to her (Therigatha, 63 and Comm.) Devout prayer is offered in the marriage ritual that the couple may be blessed with sons and grandsons (Rigveda, X, 85. 42). Childlessness was regarded as a great misfortune, and every effort was made to overcome it (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V, 3, 1.13). The general belief was that, what a childless woman looks on, gods do not accept. India then needed more and more men and women to develop the ^ucountry, and so the ideal was of a large family. The Vedic father was anxious for ten sons; the number was reduced to eight in the Smṛiti period. The apotheosis of the mother has reached a greater height in India than anywhere else. The son could never abandon his mother, even if she was bycotted socially and religiously. He was to respect her more than father. There are no doubt passages which place the father and the preceptor higher than the mother (Manusmṛiti II. 145-146). These are, however, probably due to later sacerdotal

influence. As a matter of fact Hindu culture solved the problem of the relative superiority of these three by classing them altogether as ATIGURUS or supreme worthies (Viṣṇu Smṛiti 31, 1-2).¹

It has been further observed that the widow could not inherit the property of her husband after his death; it passed on to her sons. Yet decorum required that they should live under the protecting care of their mother after the death of their father. She was in fact their DE FACTO guardian. In fact the relations between the mother and her children were very tender; people felt old not when their hair had grown gray, but when their mother was no more (Mahābhārata XIII, 268.30). Mothers were never more unhappy than when away from their children. Kuntī was separated from her sons, when they were banished for thirteen years. In her message to Kṛiṣṇa at the end of that period she observes that neither widowhood nor poverty have caused her that much affliction as her separation from her dear sons (Mahābhārata, V, 90. 69).²

It has also been pointed out that ancient Indian history knows of no matricides. In this connection reference is made to an anecdote given in Amitārudhyāna Sūtra. It is narrated that Ajātasātru, who wanted to kill his father by starvation, discovered that his plan was not succeeding because a step-mother of his was surreptitiously carrying him nourishment by smearing honey to her person. When he decided to kill his step-mother, his ministers remonstrated and said, 'Bad kings, 18,000 number, have killed their fathers, but we have not heard any who has killed his mother.' Upon this, Ajātasātru gave up his plan (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XLIX, pt. II, p. 163).³

It has also been commented that the only matricide known to Indian tradition is of Parāsūrāma. In his case the legend is probably invented to emphasize the duty of obeying the father. It is to be noted that the first boon, which Parāsūrāma asks his father after carrying out his fendish command, is his mother's resurrection with the proviso that she should never recollect her murder (Mahābhārata, III, 117.18).⁴

Attention has been drawn to the Smṛiti tradition which contains high euology of and the reverence for the mother. Thus Gautama Dharma Sūtra (II. 56) first says that the ācārya is the highest among the gurus, while some teachers hold that the mother is the highest. The Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra prescribes that a son must always serve his mother even if she has been an outcaste, since the mother undertakes for her son numerous troublesome actions (1.10, 28.9). The Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra requires the son to maintain his mother, even though an outcaste, without speaking to her. Vasishṭha Dharma Sūtra enjoins that a father who is an outcaste may be abandoned, but a mother, though patitā, is never an outcaste to the son (13.47). Manu Smṛiti relates that the ācārya exceeds by his greatness ten upādhyāyas, the father exceeds as hundred ācāryas, a mother exceeds a thousand fathers (II, 145). Śaṅkha-Likhita advise that the son should not take side (in quarrel) between his father and mother; indeed he may (if he chooses) take the side of his mother, since the mother bore him (in her womb) and nourished him; the son while living, would never be free from the debt he owes to his mother except by the performance of the Sautrāmaṇi sacrifice.

(Saṅkha-Likhita quoted in Saṁskāra Prakāśa, p. 479). The Yājñavalkya Smṛiti holds that the mother is superior to guru, ācārya and upādhyāya (1.35). The Anuśāsanaparva says that the mother excels in her greatness ten fathers or even the whole earth; there is no guru like the mother (105. 14-16). The Ādiparva in its chapter 37 says that one may avert the consequences of all curses, but a mother's curse can never be averted.⁵

Coming to the evaluation of the Purāṇa-passages on the subject we start with the evidence of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The text eulogizes Devakī, who as mother, bore in her womb Kṛishṇa, the protector of the universe.⁶ In another context, the text refers to the narrative of Mahābhārata, how Kṛishṇa dvaipāyana Vyāsa carried on the instruction of his mother for procreating issues through the wife of Vicitravīrya, who died of consumption. It is emphasized that Vyāsa did this because the order of mother can not be disobeyed.⁷ In the texts of Vāyu Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa the wives of Kaśyapa are said to be auspicious, since they proved to be the mothers of the whole world.⁸ The text of Matsya Purāṇa praises the status of motherhood of Umā,

who bore in her womb Kārtikeya.^{9A} The texts of Vāyu Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa enjoin that protection of the mother is a righteous deed.⁹ Matsya Purāṇa ordains that the position of mother excels every thing. She carries on the son in her womb and takes care of him. Her glory does not diminish, even though she may be a patitā. She can not be abandoned at any cost.¹⁰

The Purāṇa-texts also refer to divine mothers, their greatness and their benevolent character. The most common term used for them is "mātarāḥ". The "mātarāḥ" or "mothers" are spoken of as two and many. In one of the acts for sorcery it is said that two "mothers" should be employed : These two mothers are enjoined to be prepared from the clay taken out from out hill; and they should be installed at a mountain or at a solitary tree or a place that has been struck by lightning.¹¹

The mothers are said to have been produced from the tears of goddess Māheśvarī.¹² The mother goddesses are stated to be eight in number, according to another account being produced from each of the main gods - Brāhmī etc.¹³ According to another

calculation, based on diseases and afflictions, there are nine mothers - Mahāmārī (epidemic), Pūtānā (child-lifter), Kṛityā (the evil, sin personified), Śakunī, Revatī, Khalā, Koṭarī, Tāmasī and Māyā.¹⁴ According to Agni Purāṇa the nine mothers are designated as follows - (1) Kuñjarī, Brahmāṇī, (2) Mañjarī Māheśvarī, (3) Vaitālī Kaumārī, (4) Kālī Vaishṇavī, (5) Ghorā Vārāhī, (6) Vetālī Indrāṇī, (7) Urvasī Cāmūṇḍa, (8) Vetālī Caṇḍikā and (9) Jayālī Yōkshiṇī.¹⁵

According to the Purāṇas, mothers have various names according to their types. The types are as under :

(1) Having names of goddesses such as Brāhmī, Māheśvarī etc. This type includes names from well known mythological deities like Sauparṇī (from Suparṇā - Garuḍa; and his mother Suparṇī-Vinatā), Vaishṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī, Revatī, Jayantī etc,¹⁶ Umā, Ambikā, Sarasvatī, Mahalakshmī, Bhagavatī.¹⁷

(2) Having names from the "beasts" and birds like Biḍālī, Ulūkā, Kukkuṭī, Gardabhī, Krauñcā, Sarpakarṇī, Śakunī,¹⁸ Pipīlikā.¹⁹

- (3) Having names of trees like Udumbarī, Asvatthā Bilvā,²⁰ kadambā,²¹ Vatamātaraḥ.²²
- (4) Having names indicating fierceness and grotesqueness like Durmukhī, Bhīṣaṇī, Raudrā, Saṁhārī, Sushkakāyā, Prāṇaharā, Jātaḥārī, Nishṭhurā.²³ Asmadamsā, Jvālāmukhī, Ayomukhī;²⁴ Mātangi.²⁵

Two prominent classes of mothers are (1) Gotramātaraḥ, which include Śrīmātā, Tārāṇī, Āśāpūrti, Icchā, Ārtinaśinī, Jaganmātā,²⁶ etc. The other class is represented by Vaṭamātaraḥ associated with a definite tree, i.e. Vaṭa; one of them is called Vaṭayakshiṇī; but this group includes the well known mothers, such as Brāhmī, Pārvatī etc., indicating the old goddesses getting identified with tree - worship.²⁷ It is said that the Vaṭamatāraḥ, Brāhmī, Kaumārī etc. were created by Brahmā to kill the demon Andhaka, near a Vaṭa tree; hence they became famous by that name.²⁸ There are others named Taila-mātaraḥ.²⁹ Carpaṭa-mātaraḥ and Paula-mātaraḥ are two other names applied to them, as they were invited by Śiva to partake of Carpaṭā (capātī) and paula (pūrī).³⁰ Taila-mātaraḥ (oil mothers) are those who are given offering at night, for gaining power.³¹

From what has been said above, it follows that mothers had a respectable position in the society. They were supposed to be INSIGNIA of prowess and protection. There was practice of establishing images of "Mothers" (goddesses) at various quarters of a habitat for the protection of people and for general weal, including the gain of issues. These goddesses were divine representatives of the earthly mothers; being objects of reverence, worship and honour.

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2. Ibid, p. 102.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, pp. 580-581.
6. Vishṇu Purāṇa, V. 2, 20.
7. Ibid, IV. 20. 58.
8. Vāyu Purāṇa, 66, 54,
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 2. 55.
- 9A. Matsya Purāṇa, 13. 8.
9. Vāyu Purāṇa, 69. 107.
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 7. 56.
10. Matsya Purāṇa, 227, 150.
11. Agni Purāṇa, 125, 48.
12. Śiva Purāṇa, V, 503 ff.
13. Varāha Purāṇa, 27, 31.
14. Skanda Purāṇa, V. 1, 64. 8-9
15. Agni Purāṇa, 315. 19.
16. Matsya Purāṇa, 178, 9 ff.
Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 109.
17. Skanda Purāṇa, V, 1, 70. 40-44.
18. Matsya Purāṇa, 178. 9 ff.

19. Agni Purāṇa, 125, 7-13.
20. Matsya Purāṇa, 178, 30, 69, 70.
21. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 110.
22. Ibid, V, 1, 70. 44.
23. Agni Purāṇa, 125, 7-13.
24. Matsya Purāṇa, 178. 30.
25. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 111.
26. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 103-111.
27. Ibid, V, 1, 70.41; 43, 44.
28. Ibid, V, 1, 37, 24.
29. Ibid, V, 1, 34, 83.
30. Ibid, V, 1, 34, 82-83.
31. Ibid, V, 1, 35. 3.

CONCLUSION : SOME OBSERVATIONS

It may be re-asserted, that the Purāṇa-passages relating to the position of women reveal a reconciliatory picture of antiquated norms and subsequential socio-cultural changes adhering to the traditional technique of samupavṛimhaṇa (augmentation) in a manner that the authoritative character of Purāṇas should not decrease in later times. The Purāṇa-passages seem to stick fast to the Smṛiti-based prophetic statement that "a time might come that their rules might become obsolete and that if any rules framed by them are found against the spirit of the age they should be liberally modified or abrogated." Cases of modification or abrogation of the established rules are discernible in the Purāṇa-passages. An example may be illustrated here. Thus in conformity to the Smṛiti-tradition, Purāṇas enumerate eight forms of marriage, namely, Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha, Prājapatya, Āsura, Gārdharva, Rākshasa and Paisāca. But the text of Skanda Purāṇa as shown in the chapter on marriage increases this number to ten by adding Prātigha and Ghātana forms. Similarly, the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa reduces the number to four unique types and categories them under the appellation of "udvāha". Accordingly four types of wives are enumerated, namely, Kālakṛitā, Krayakṛitā, Pitṛidattā and

Svyaṃutā. Possible interpretation of these terms is worked ^{out} in the chapter on marriage. It would not be out of place to mention that such cases of modificatory trends can scarcely be taken in the sense of capricious imagination of the Purāṇa-author. On the other hand they tend to show that the doors of Purāṇas were open for incorporation of some obsolete customs and practices which were lying unmarked in the floating channel of the age-old tradition. It is also possible that they have an indication to the developments of the later periods, which had not received wide-spread recognition in the society.

The Purāṇa-passages probably bring out the validity of the remark that "what is not seen in the Vedic tradition is all noticed in Smṛiti tradition and what is not seen in both is available in the Purāṇa tradition." In support, two examples may be cited here. Thus the text of Śiva Purāṇa alludes to the categories of a pativrata, namely, Uttamā, madhyamā, nikṛishṭā and adhamā. Pativrata or pāṭivṛata dharma is too well known to Vedic and Smṛiti traditions, but the classification of pativrata wives or their gradation and ranking

of the kind appears to be typical of the Purāṇic injunction. Similarly, the reference of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa to the mānushī category of patnī and her differentiation from the pativrata is unique in the Purāṇa-tradition. No such distinction is known to have been made in non-Purāṇic traditions.

The Purāṇa-passages also reveal that the Paurāṇikas were not unmindful to the changing circumstances. In fact, they felt the least hesitation in reframing the scope of their composition responding to the demand of the age. Thus, generally speaking scholars refer to the passages showing that the birth of daughter was considered to be an unwelcome event. But the Purāṇa-passages are suggestive of the fact that this was not the universal phenomenon. It has been pointed out in the chapter on position of girls that, Liṅga Purāṇa explains the meaning of the word 'putrī' on the lines of the etymology of the word putra that "putrī is one who saves her parents from the hell called put"; that Matsya Purāṇa relates that a daughter who is not destitute of śīla or virtue is equal to ten sons; that Padma Purāṇa enjoins that a

daughter who is possessed of śīla is auspicious and equal to ten sons; that the text of Vishṇudharma (upa) Purāṇa alludes to the laudatory narrative of a girl whose very name was Śīladhanā. In a number of cases Purāṇic view of customs and practices is presented under the camouflage of crypto - import of mythical narratives in order to give them orthodox colour and in order that they may not appear alien to the Purāṇa-tradition. Some examples are underpinned here;

In the chapter on the position of the widows, reference has been made to the tonsure of the widows in Purāṇa-passages. A number of theories have been propounded by the scholars explaining the circumstances in which this custom was introduced in the orthodox circle. Mostly, it is emphasized that this custom was borrowed from the jainas and Bauddhas. In both the sects the nuns used to be shaved. In this connection the Kāśīkhaṇḍa of Skanda Purāṇa states that tying up into a braid of hairs leads to the bondage of the husband. Therefore a widow should always shave her head. Since the Purāṇa-passage under reference is quoted in Madanapārijāta and other nibandhas, it is

evident that the Purāṇic view on the issue had its wide-spread appeal in the early medieval and medieval periods.

In the chapter on marriage reference has been made of the fact that by about 200 A.D. popular feeling had become insistent on pre-puberty marriage of the girls, that this change was largely due to the proselytizing trends of Buddhism encouraging the institution of monks and ~~nuns~~, that there was laxity of morals among nuns, that the girls had generally ceased to study any thing, that the society did not like girls to remain doing nothing; that from the time of R̥gveda there was a mystical belief that Soma, Gandharva and Agni were the divine guardians of a girl; that this Vedic conception has been given a mythical garb in the Purāṇa-tradition enjoining that the age of marriage in case of the bride, the best is when she is eight years old, because when she shows pubic hairs, the god Soma enjoys her; at the advent of menstruation - fluid the Gandharvas enjoy her; when the breasts begin to show Agni enjoys her; hence a girl should be married prior to ^{her} ~~his~~ reaching the

period of menstruation, and when she is eight years of age; that the girl who begins the 'period' is called nagnikā, hence a girl should be married when she is anagnikā to gain the real benefit of kanyādāna.

In the chapter on the Purdā-system reference has been made to the observation that the general adoption of Purdā-system by the ruling and aristocratic families of Hindu community is subsequent to the Muslim rule, that it was accepted by the Hindu society partly in imitation of the manners of the conquerors and partly as an additional protection of the women-folk; that Purāṇa-tradition is not all silent about the prevalence of Purdā-system, that there are at least three passages in Matsya Purāṇa, which allude to its prevalence in the royal and aristocratic families, that these passages are later interpolations and may be dated ^{around} 1250 A.D.; i.e., after the advent of the Muslims.

Lastly, it may be remarked that the Purāṇa-passages can hardly be evaluated in a correct psycho-sociological perspective for giving

any absolute judgement on the validity of the observation that the position of Hindu women had been on the whole deteriorating during the last two thousand years. It is equally difficult to decide with definite certitude on the basis of the Purāṇa-passages that most of the grievances from which the women-folk is supposed to have been suffering are more apparent than real. Still more difficult is to demonstrate that the downcast status was accorded to women by a handful pandits motivated by complacent theories and artificial norms.

It may be reasonable to talk that we are living in an era of rationalism and equality, which demands necessary reformation in the position of women. Nevertheless, the Purāṇic view in its entirety was in no way contrary to "rationality and equality" or to giving sanction to reformation in the position of women. Quite a good number of evidences have been underlined in the relevant chapters of the present dissertation. Most noteworthy of the kind is the chapter on position of mothers and divine mothers revealing that the mothers

had a respectable position in the society and their heavenly counterparts the mother - goddesses were considered to be INSIGNIA of prowess and protection and objects of reverence, worship and honour.

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